Participatory Planning Shapes a Neighborhood: the Upgrading of Sokoura in Aboisso, Côte d'Ivoire

by

Hope Hilary Fang

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Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 1995

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Signature of Author: _____
Department of Urban Studies and Planning
May 16, 2002

Certified by: _____
Lawrence J. Vale
Professor of Urban Studies and Planning
Thesis Advisor

Accepted by: _____
Dennis Frenchman
Chair, Master of City Planning Program
Department of Urban Studies and Planning

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Abstract

From 1985 to 1992, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded a squatter settlement upgrading project in the Sokoura neighborhood of Aboisso in Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa. This thesis examines the neighborhood design results of the Sokoura project in the context of the social, cultural and political factors and local planning processes in Côte d'Ivoire and Aboisso.

Given a history of centralized urban planning in Côte d'Ivoire, development projects in Aboisso have mostly relied on the authority of the national government, and there has been little room for public participation in planning. However, Côte d'Ivoire's efforts to decentralize administration and development since 1980 have delegated more responsibility at the local level to municipalities. USAID's upgrading project in Sokoura departed from the traditional top-down methods of planning in Aboisso by addressing the needs of a poor, largely immigrant community, and organizing their participation in the implementation of the neighborhood upgrading. Although participatory planning did not prove sustainable after the departure of the coordinating non-governmental organization, it succeeded in creating a physical design that was better adapted to the needs of Sokoura residents than the urban design standards normally used in Aboisso. A comparison to other neighborhoods in the city however reveals an imbalance between Sokoura's new infrastructure and the lesser amenities in the rest of the town. The inequality has been a source of contention for Aboisso residents, which, together with the lesser social and political status of the Sokoura population, led to a lack of interest from the Mayor's Office in continuing the participatory methods introduced during the upgrading. In contrast to Sokoura, projects undertaken by the municipality since 1992 have been non-participatory and focused on improving city amenities in the downtown area.

Thesis Supervisor: Lawrence J. Vale
Professor of Urban Studies and Planning

Thesis Reader: Bishwapriya Sanyal
Professor of Urban Studies and Planning
Head, Department of Urban Studies and Planning

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Abbreviations

AFUAS	*Amicale des Frères Unis d'Aboisso-Sokoura* Association of the United Brothers of Aboisso-Sokoura
AFVP	*Association Française des Volontaires du Progrès* French Association of Volunteers of Progress
AUA	*Agence d'Urbanisme d'Abidjan* Abidjan Urban Development Agency
BNETD	*Bureau National d'Etudes Techniques et du Développement* National Office for Technical Studies and Projects
CIE	*Compagnie Ivoirienne d'Electricité* Ivorian Electricity Company
DCGTx	*Direction et Contrôle des Grands Travaux* Public Works Administration and Control
FED	*Fonds Européen de Développement* European Development Fund
FPI	*Front Populaire Ivoirien* Ivorian Popular Front
PACOM	*Programme d'Appui aux Communes* Support Program for Communes
PDCC	*Programme d'Appui au Communes Côtières* Support Program for Coastal Communes
PDCI-RDA	*Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire-Rassemblement Démocratic* Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire
SODECI	*Société d'Eau de Côte d'Ivoire* Water Company of Côte d'Ivoire
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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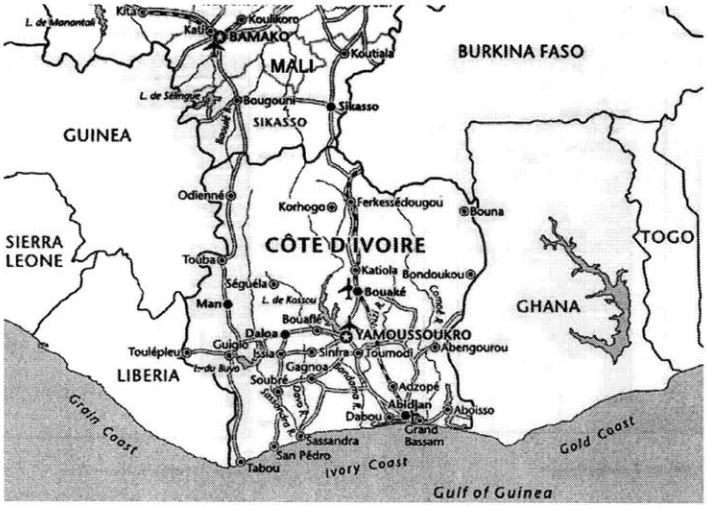

Figure 1: Map of Cote d'Ivoire
Source: Economist Intelligence Unit, 2001

Côte d'Ivoire covers an area of 300,000 sq.km, about the size of the state of New Mexico in the United States, and much more densely populated than other Sub-Saharan countries.

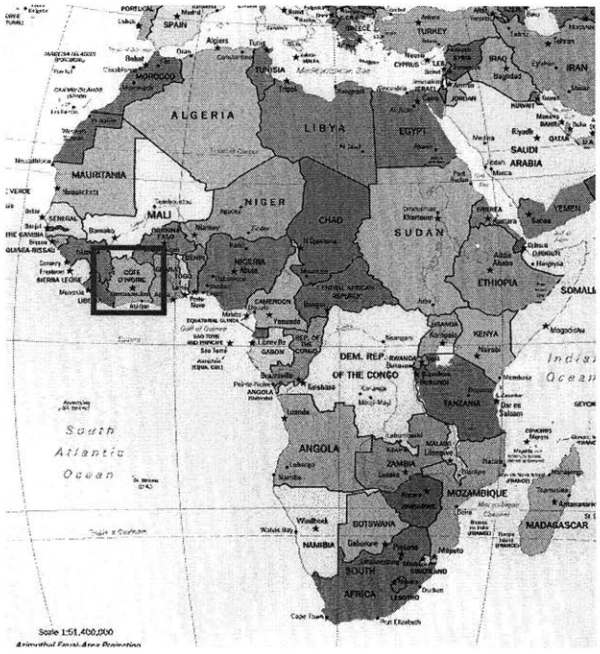

Figure 2: Location of Côte d'Ivoire in Africa
Source: CIA World Factbook 1997

Introduction

Aboisso, a town of about 26,000 people in the southeastern region of Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa, benefited from United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funding for the upgrading of a large squatter settlement called Sokoura in the late 1980s and 1990s. In 1985, Sokoura was home to nearly 7,000 people, mostly immigrants from neighboring Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea who had been displaced twice before to make room for the expansion of the city. When I arrived in Aboisso in 1996, upgrading construction had been finished and the French volunteer organization AFVP was in the final phases of the project, involving mostly the collection of payments from the new landowners and the final resolution of issues regarding the attribution of land titles. Over the next two years of my work with the Aboisso Mayor's Office, I became interested in the results of the upgrading project, both in terms of outcomes for Sokoura's population and how the project impacted the development of the whole city. By the time the project officially ended in 1997, Sokoura was somewhat of an oddity compared with other neighborhoods: the substantial road infrastructure throughout the neighborhood stood in contrast to the mud houses and poverty of the residents. In other parts of town, wealthier people with higher standard housing complained of their comparative lack of basic road infrastructure. The upgrading project had established a different neighborhood in both in its physical form and social composition from other parts of Aboisso. How had this difference in form occurred? How did it serve the neighborhood's residents? Did it also benefit the whole city? Through the upgrading, Sokoura also retained its identity as a predominantly Muslim, poor and immigrant neighborhood in a predominantly Christian Ivorian town. While Sokoura community groups had participated in the upgrading project through the intermediary of a French NGO, they relapsed into being ignored by the Mayor's Office after the end of the project. Under what conditions had the Mayor's Office worked with the community's participation? Had the effort to include the population in the project's decision making been worth it, given that local authorities did not sustain it? Had community input resulted in a physical design that was more suited to the needs of the population than the planning methods usually implemented by the authorities? If so, why didn't the local authorities support the community participation that had been fostered during the project?

In order to address these questions, this thesis begins with an overview in Chapter 1 of the ideas behind the participatory planning programmed in the Sokoura project by USAID. Chapters 2 and 3 consider the historical and political factors that have shaped urban development in Côte d'Ivoire and Aboisso, with a focus on the 40 years since the country's independence from France in 1960. The context of history and politics is important in understanding the significance of the Sokoura project for the city. Despite recent decentralization efforts, the develop-

ment of Ivorian cities has mostly been determined by the highly centralized national government with little authority given to municipalities and citizens. Furthermore, Aboisso's historical origins and development tell the story of a town and region deeply proud of their local Agni culture and traditions, which differ from the culture of a mostly immigrant and Muslim population in the Sokoura quarter. These factors, among others, appear to be potential obstacles for the implementation of participatory planning in the neighborhood.
Chapter 4 describes the goals, execution and preliminary outcomes of the Sokoura upgrading, relying mostly on reports by the implementing volunteer organization. Chapter 5 evaluates the outcomes of the project's participatory process for Sokoura and in the context of the whole city, with a focus on the resulting urban design, and political and social implications. The last chapter covers final discussions and conclusions.

The data for the thesis were provided by reports from the Aboisso commune and Ivorian government, minutes of Aboisso municipal council meetings, interviews with local authorities and residents and a review of literature on urban upgrading and Ivorian planning policy. General research on environmental conditions and the relationship between local institutions in Aboisso was done between April 1996 and April 1998. More focused interviews and research related to Ivorian urban policy and development of the town were carried out in Aboisso in January 2002. All photographs are by the author.

Chapter I

Urban Upgrading and Participatory Planning

Since the 1960s, important increases in population and high rates of urbanization spurred by economic and social policies that encouraged migration to cities led to a sharp rise in the urban populations of developing countries.[1] The high rates of urbanization, shortage of housing, and influx of poor populations led to the formation of slums in and around cities. Generally, slums are described as "unplanned and under served neighborhoods [...] occupied by squatters without legal recognition or rights."[2] Living conditions are usually crowded and sometimes precarious. Without access to basic services like sanitation, water supply and trash collection, slum populations face serious health, environmental and security problems.[3]

I. Sites and services and urban upgrading

Governments and development agencies have tried various approaches to improve the conditions of slum areas. In the 1960s and 1970s, inner-city slum areas were razed much in the manner of urban renewal projects in the United States and Europe, and their residents were dispersed or relocated to new sites on the outskirts of the city.[4] This approach however required expensive demolition work, and poorly served the former squatters who were resettled in areas far away from their places of work.[5]

Another approach was to clear the slum settlement and redevelop the land with new housing structures for the slum dwellers. Problems encountered with this approach were high project costs, inability to recover the costs from the residents of the new buildings, lack of maintenance and degradation of the new structures.[6]

A shift towards the concepts of "sites and services" and slum upgrading started in the 1970s, based on the work of scholars and practitioners like John Turner, who argued that appropriate housing could be better provided by residents themselves than by the government.[7] Sites and services refers to the provision of housing sites provided with basic amenities like water, electricity and roads, which can be bought or leased by households. The provision of the housing structure, however, is left up to inhabitants themselves.[8] The first sites and services project in Africa was implemented in 1972 by the World Bank in Dakar, Senegal.[9]

The term slum or urban upgrading refers to the improvement of existing slum areas. While some households may be relocated because of the new infrastructure, upgrading of the neigh-

borhood is carried out while maintaining the current residents on the land: improvement of roads, access to water and electricity, as well as public services such as schools and health centers. As in sites and services, there is no actual building of housing structures by the government or agency involved, but residents are encouraged to improve their dwellings through access to credit and technical assistance.[10]

Using these two approaches, governments in developing countries moved from the role of housing provider to that of a housing enabler.[11] In contrast to the previous technocratic methods of public housing provision, which championed a scientific "one best way" method of planning and building dwellings for the poor, slum upgrading uses a more flexible and incremental approach.[12] Establishing land tenure for the residents became an important part of the process, as past experiences showed that ownership usually increases residents' willingness to invest in upgrading their homes.

Advantages of upgrading and sites and services include lower costs, less disruption to the community involved than bulldozing and rebuilding,[13] improved affordability of housing to the poor,[14] and community participation that better addresses the needs of the residents and increases their likelihood of supporting the project.

II. Community participation

Community participation is a key component of urban upgrading projects and as such has received increased attention since the mid 1970s. According to Samuel Paul in 1986,

> In the context of development, community participation refers to an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects rather than merely receive a share of project benefits.[15]

Participation is also seen as "an evolutionary process in which activities at the project level can create the conditions for an increased popular participation in development programs at the local, regional, or national levels."[16]

There is also an implicit idea that public participation will yield more democratic decision making that better serves the population at large. Without it, writes Mabogunje,

> urban management tends towards authoritarian rule by technocrats and political bosses serving the interests of the middle and upper classes in the community. The result of their limited concern is most manifest in the sharp contrast in living and environmental conditions between the rich and the poor neighborhoods in these cities.[17]

Benefits of community participation are increased project acceptance by the local population, more appropriate interventions based on local knowledge and preferences, and project sustainability.[18] Negative consequences may include delays in project implementation, creation of conflicts between participants,[19] and problems in cost recovery.[20]

Community participation can be a way of incorporating the social organization of a squatter settlement in the upgrading process. Given their marginalized status in the city, these informal social arrangements are an important form of organization in informal housing.[21]

III. Urban upgrading in Côte d'Ivoire

The combination of an increased low-income population and Ivorian government policy in the 1960s and 1970s that prioritized the construction of high standard housing led to an acute housing shortage and the formation of numerous squatter settlements,[22] especially in Abidjan which held 40% of the country's urban population in 1988.[23] It is estimated that in 1990, 15 to 17% of the population of Abidjan lived in precarious settlements, which had an annual growth rate of 6 to 8%. In 1994, 60% of residents in informal settlements were immigrants.[24] As in many African countries after independence in the 1960s, the Ivorian government initially favored a model of European modernism, and squatter settlements were razed in an effort to improve the image of the urban environment.[25]

The first experiments with slum upgrading in Côte d'Ivoire took place in Abidjan between 1977 and 1980 in the Abobo, Adjamé, Koumassi and Marcory neighborhoods, and were financed by the World Bank. The innovation in these projects was mostly that they were financed with contributions from the inhabitants.[26] At the level of physical urban planning, however, the upgrading followed standard orthogonal lot shapes and sizes.[27] Sokoura is among a second group of slum upgrading projects that started in 1986, funded by the World Bank and USAID.[28]

The Abidjan Urban Development Agency (*AUA - Agence d'Urbanisme d'Abidjan*) makes a distinction between "precarious neighborhoods" and "slum/spontaneous neighborhoods." Precarious neighborhoods are under-equipped and have low-quality housing, but are considered suitable for upgrading and legalization, whereas slum and spontaneous neighborhoods cannot be legalized or upgraded because the site is slated for public works or is physically unsuitable.[29] The Ivorian government's current policy with regard to these neighborhoods is to upgrade them when possible and to relocate residents if upgrading is not feasible.[30]

Until 1994, upgrading projects fell under the responsibility of the *Direction et Contrôle des Grands Travaux* (*DCGTx*, the Public Works Administration and Control) and the Ministry

of Construction and Urbanism. DCGTx was a powerful central institution that covered the activities of many different ministries, such as budgeting and rural and urban development. Its power was however downgraded in 1994, when it became the *Bureau National d'Etudes Techniques et du Développement* (*BNETD*, the National Office for Technical Studies and Projects) and the Ministry of Construction and Urbanism took over many responsibilities in the area of urban planning and housing.

Endnotes

[1] Sanyal, 2000
[2] Upgrading Urban Communities: A Resource for Practitioners, 2002
[3] Ibid
[4] Laquian, 2001
[5] Upgrading Urban Communities: A Resource for Practitioners, 2002
[6] Laquian, 2001
[7] Turner, 1972
[8] Keare and Parris, 1982; Srinivas, 2002
[9] White, 1985 in Mabogunje, 1990
[10] Upgrading Urban Communities: A Resource for Practitioners, 2002
[11] Laquian, 2001
[12] Ibid
[13] Upgrading Urban Communities: A Resource for Practitioners, 2002
[14] Keare and Parris, 1982
[15] Bamberger, 1986, page vii
[16] Bamberger, 1986, page viii
[17] Mabogunje, 1989, page 196
[18] Bamberger, 1986
[19] Ibid
[20] Keare and Parris, 1982
[21] Mabogunje, 1989; Diomande, 2001
[22] Cohen, 1974
[23] The World Bank, 1995
[24] The World Bank, 2001
[25] Diomande, 2001
[26] Diomande, 2001; The World Bank, 2001
[27] Diomande, 2001
[28] Ibid
[29] The World Bank, 2001
[30] Ibid

Chapter II

Planning policy in Côte d'Ivoire

In order to better understand how national planning trends have affected the urban condition of Aboisso, this chapter examines the background of the Ivorian planning policy, its historical and political influences, and the current efforts of the national government to decentralize the administration and development of urban areas.

I. Ivorian planning background

Urban Growth Policy

Four main periods can be distinguished in Ivorian urban planning policy:[1]

- 1843-1960: development of cities as colonial administrative and trade centers
- 1960-1969: post-independence, rapid urbanization and high economic growth
- 1969-1980: beginning of economic recession; modification of urban policies from public housing and modernism to neighborhood upgrading and private housing finance
- 1980s-present: economic and fiscal crisis, move towards decentralization

While Côte d'Ivoire's economic growth has been fueled by the development of its important agricultural exports, the Ivorian government considered early on urban development as an integral part of economic growth.
In 1969, Minister of Construction and Town-Planning, Michel Goly-Kouassi proclaimed urban development to be a means of increasing the investments and growth in the country:

> We want dynamic town-planning to accelerate the promotion of our towns and to incite investors to accomplishments of quality. Each operation succeeds as a multiplying power on the development of our towns by the effect of emulation which it creates.[2]

Urban living was declared to be accessible to all and a means by which to bring progress to

people across the country. Goly-Kouassi declared in 1965 that urban planning concepts that had previously only been used for colonial neighborhoods were to apply to rural and urban environments throughout the country.[3]

Urban growth in Côte d'Ivoire has been concentrated in Abidjan, which has an estimated 3 million residents out of a total population of 15 million in 1998, or about a fifth of the country's population. Originally developed as a transportation center linking the coast to the interior by rail, Abidjan is today about six times bigger than Côte d'Ivoire's second biggest city, Bouaké (460,000) in the center of the country. Other major cities are Yamoussoukro (190,000) to the north of Abidjan, and Daloa to the west (170,000).[4] Yamoussoukro, the native village of former president Félix Houphouët-Boigny, received over one third of the country's urban investment in the 1960s and 1970s, and officially became the political capital of Côte d'Ivoire in 1983.[5] Its population increased from 500 in 1950 to 190,000 in 2002.[6] Abidjan however remains the uncontested economic, administrative and cultural capital of the country.

The urban population of Côte d'Ivoire has increased rapidly since the 1950s, at an average rate of 11.5% per year until 1965, and at 8% per year from 1966 to 1988.[7] Today the country is one of the most urbanized in West Africa, with 46% of the population living in cities compared to 34% for Sub-Saharan Africa.[8]

The overall population growth rate has fallen from 4% in the 1970s to less than 2% in the 1990s due to lower fertility rates and immigration, and higher mortality.[9] The current population growth rate is 1.78%, and Côte d'Ivoire's population is projected at 20 million for 2015.[10]

A historically centralized planning system

After Côte d'Ivoire became independent from France in 1960, the system of government remained based on the highly centralized French colonial model.[11] Reasons for this continuity included a desire to control any rivalry between ethnic groups through a centralized system, the advantage of having an administrative structure that was already in place, and the government finding that a centralized system would be most conducive to achieving their economic development goals.[12] According to Crook, the continuance of the French administrative and education system, combined with the 30-year single party rule of President Houphouët-Boigny's PDCI (*Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire*), led to an authoritarian political system with limited public participation.[13]

> Fearing urban political opposition, Houphouët-Boigny refused to allow greater political participation in urban affairs and instead established more effective instruments of central control. This motivation [was] behind the proliferation of *sous-préfectures* and [...] *préfectures*. Still preoccupied with holding the nation together ethnically and territorially, the government, particularly the

> president himself, [did not admit] the incompatibility of its desire for central control and its frequently proclaimed goals of local urban development.[14]

Under Houphouët-Boigny the national government therefore retained considerable control over decisions about land use and urban planning, and cities were managed by prefects, appointed representatives of the central administration who acted as mayors in major urban areas. The sub-prefects, who administered sub-regions, served as mayors of the towns in which they were based if there was not already a prefect in place.[15] No new communes were created and no municipal elections took place between 1956 and 1980, and any decentralization that took place was actually only a deconcentration of the central administration by the appointment of more government representatives to different parts of the country. This policy was presented by then Secretary of State for the Interior Thierry-Lebbé as a way to "bring the administration closer to the administered while reducing the distances and in permitting the heads of circonscriptions to maintain close contact with the villages and villagers."[16]
An example of the centralized allocation of public funding were the rotating Independence Day holidays (*Fêtes Nationales tournantes*), a program that brought celebrations for the August 7th independence day to a different city every year. The host city would, for the occasion, receive substantial government funding for major infrastructure, equipment and services, such as roads and public buildings. This practice ended after the 1979 Independence Day in Katiola because of an economic crisis caused by a fall in key agricultural prices and a consequent reduction in the central government's budget.

II. An unequal distribution of resources

"Double or nothing" policy

In the early days of independence, the Ivorian government pursued what has been described as a "double or nothing" policy with regard to urban development[17]: priority was given to investments in the grandest, most modern housing and infrastructure possible in order to attract outside investment. Most of this investment was concentrated in Abidjan to the detriment of upcountry cities; in some Abidjan neighborhoods the infrastructure and services were similar to those in developed countries.[18] This approach however excluded most of the Ivorian population and led to large disparities between the rich minority and poor majority.[19]
Cohen explains:

> High quality housing, building standards, capital-intensive infrastructure, incentives for growth-producing industries rather than employment-generat-

> ing enterprises, and spatial planning all reflect official intentions to develop urban areas according to ultramodern standards. This policy ignores the majority of the population, providing few services which urban residents can afford or simply not providing services at all. Housing policies force people to reside in *bidonvilles* [slums] in unsanitary, crowded and expensive conditions. Rather than improve these *quartiers populaires* [ordinary neighborhoods], the government allocates resources to the residential neighborhoods inhabited by the ruling class. These policies suggest a "double-or-nothing" analogy: either ultramodern development will be reached or a dismal failure will occur - urban residents will either live in high-quality neighborhoods or have to resign themselves to the mud of Marcory or Nouveau Koumassi, two of Abidjan's bidonvilles.[20]

This double or nothing policy has also largely determined land use policy in Côte d'Ivoire, with large foreign firms benefiting from expansive tracts of land for their factories, tax free. The resulting low density growth has in turn created important transportation problems, especially for the poor in large cities like Abidjan.[21]

Colonial urban design:
a continued pursuit of European standards

In his survey of research on urban planning in Africa, Mabogunje writes:

> [...] the relationship between the high cost of building materials and the colonially derived standards and criteria for determining officially approved housing were critical factors constraining the development of adequate housing facilities for the urban poor whose shelters were frequently destroyed by official demolition.[22]

In terms of urban design, the double or nothing policy in Côte d'Ivoire took the form of high standards of design and construction imposed by the national government. As a continuance of French colonial development standards chosen to ensure the construction of durable, high quality housing, these standards are too expensive to be met by the majority of the population. Applicants for land plots can be denied if authorities decide that they do not have sufficient resources to develop a site according to required standards. In many cases, people who have land do not apply for construction permits because they know that they will not meet the required criteria, and they proceed to build without proper technical advice or authorization.[23] This exacerbates the number of non-permitted construction projects and illegal squatters. The

gap between official housing standards and what is affordable to the general population is a common phenomenon in developing countries, and it results in a shortage of adequate housing for the poor.[24]

According to Cohen, standards in Côte d'Ivoire are mostly based on the preferences of the expatriate populations living in Abidjan.[25] A 1965 law provided that in order to receive construction permits, prospective house builders had to "prove their ability to finish their project" by giving a 300,000 CFA deposit to the Ivorian government, with the possibility of recovering some of it early if needed to finish construction. In 1974, this was about half of the cost of building a durable house, and the average income for a family in Abidjan at the time was 25,000 CFA per month. Therefore, the number of permits declined, and construction could not match the need for urban housing.

The requirement of high standards of living harks back to French colonial practices of racially segregating residential neighborhoods. Basing the need for segregation on concerns for the health of white populations, colonial administrators in Africa made racial and ethnic segregation a central part of urban planning in the early days of colonialism.[26] The segregation was achieved through the use of design standards rather than more controversial laws about race.[27] In her examination of design politics in French colonies, Gwendolyn Wright quotes a governor-general of Madagascar in the 1920s:

> The segregation of indigenous districts, indispensable in colonial cities, in no way constitutes, at least for the present, a grievous racial discrimination for those to whom it applies. In other words, segregation can be based, not on race, but on a standard of living... and in Madagascar certain districts will be reserved for inhabitants with "a European standard of living."[28]

A journalist at the time also remarked that "by the simple technique of building inspections, Madagascar [...] achieved the principle of segregation without recourse to dangerous legislation concerning racial discrimination."[29]

While the motive of racial discrimination does not apply to post-independence Côte d'Ivoire, the continued imposition of high building and design standards has in fact resulted in a class and economic segregation between, on the one hand, expatriates and Ivorians that can afford to live at the required standards, and the great majority of those for whom higher standards of living are inaccessible. The segregation and inequality is further exacerbated by the fact that the government allocates more investment in terms of infrastructure and services to the high standard neighborhoods, a trend found in Abidjan as well as in secondary cities like Aboisso.

Limited land ownership

The distribution of land in Côte d'Ivoire is highly controlled by politicians and civil servants. Cohen's examination of land allocations between 1960 and 1970 revealed an increasing number of allocations made to people in or closely tied to administrative and political posts. In 1970, 49.9% of land allocations by the government were to people linked to the administration.[30] Because land allocation has been influenced by personal ties and used to gain political support rather than determined by spatial and economic factors, the majority of the population is faced with a lack of land available for housing development. This in turn exacerbates the housing shortage and high prices of shelter.[31]
The government's role in land allocation has increased with the expansion of Ivorian cities. Its control over the process has perpetuated the political aspect of land distribution, and has also allowed the limitation of land ownership by foreigners.[32] The process of land allocation is further explained in the context of Aboisso in Chapter 3.

Local traditional chiefs are significant landowners of areas on the outskirts of cities. Traditional land rights tend to be handed down by lineage groups rather than by households.[33] In other words, land rights tend to revert back to the local traditional chief rather than inherited by other members of a family. Heath explains that "in the Agni kingdom of the eastern forest, the village chief has ultimate right over the land. Land is ceded to families in return for a gift [or a percentage of revenue from the property].[34]
There have been cases in the past in which the Ivorian government did not properly indemnify indigenous populations for the taking of their land for urban development, as in the example of the Ebriés who were displaced by the development of Abidjan, but ethnic leaders are now officially included at the local level in land allocation commissions. Often the development of new land requires them to be compensated as customary property owners. Also, village chiefs intervene as negotiators to resolve land allocation disputes.

III. Role of traditional ethnic leadership

There are over 60 ethnic groups in Côte d'Ivoire.[35] Today roughly 30% of the country's population are foreigners, and 30 to 40% of Côte d'Ivoire's population are first or second generation Ivorians, mostly of Burkinabè, Ghanaian, Guinean or Malian descent, who came to Côte d'Ivoire when the government encouraged immigration from the 1950s to the 1970s to provide cheap labor for agricultural plantations.[36] The influx of people, mostly from Muslim countries, has led to a considerable change in the religious composition of the country, and approximately 45% of the population today is Muslim.[37]
With the mix of different ethnic groups and religions in urban areas, ethnic leaders and associa-

tions have emerged as important social, political and economic organizations in Ivorian cities, especially to African immigrants, for whom ethnic associations play an important support role in adapting to urban life.[38] According to Cohen, they can serve as "employment agencies, credit bureaus, social security systems, and social centers."[39]

Mabogunje also emphasizes the importance of ethnic organizations in squatter settlements where residents, because of their illegal situation, cannot rely on the local authorities to provide services such as security and justice. They resort to a social organization that combines traditional society with the needs of their urban surroundings. In West African countries, these organizations are often based on the ethnic origins of the residents.[40] The associations do not however have the adequate capacity to address issues like sanitation, education, health and water supply, which require considerable financial and material resources.[41]

The Ivorian government has encouraged the role of traditional Ivorian ethnic chiefs as political leaders in order to control cross-ethnic group coalitions that could threaten its authority: the political role of ethnic leaders makes any attack on government an attack on traditional authority. It also allows rural areas without elected local representatives to participate in political life through their traditional ethnic leaders.[43]

IV. Decentralization

In Côte d'Ivoire the first legal steps towards decentralization were taken in 1978, with the creation of 26 new municipalities, among them Aboisso. The mayors of the new communes were initially designated by the ruling PDCI party, but starting in 1980 mayors and city councils across the country were elected within the PDCI. In 1985, a further 98 communes were created.[44] Today Côte d'Ivoire has a total of 196 communes and elections are multi-party.

According to Hillebrand, the decentralization process in Côte d'Ivoire has been "top-down, authoritarian, and largely formal," because of two reasons: it followed the centralized French administrative model that only delegated minor responsibilities and rights to local authorities, and the autocratic style of President Houphouët-Boigny further reinforced the role of the central government.[45] In the wake of the economic crisis caused by the fall in agricultural prices in the early 1980s, the Ivorian government became increasingly unable to meet the needs of the country, and decentralization was adopted as a means to alleviate its burden,[46] as well as to satisfy the structural adjustment requirements of the World Bank and international donor agencies.[47]

Decentralization has also been used as a means of democratization. Houphouët-Boigny hoped to revitalize the PDCI's links to its constituency by promoting more public participation in local governance.[48] In the late 1980s, democratization and "good governance," were also a

priority for funding agencies, who asked for increased local participation in decision making and a more transparent, accountable and responsive government.[49]

Structure of local government

The majority of Côte d'Ivoire's 196 communes have populations of less than 20,000, and many have fewer than 10,000 people. While classified as "urban" by Ivorian law, many are in fact small administrative towns or large villages. Their administrative area usually includes outlying villages within a radius of 8 km of the town.[50]

The Mayor and his deputies are elected councilors who are in turn elected by the municipal council during their first post-election meeting. The Mayor appoints his Chief of Cabinet and hires the municipal staff, except for key civil servant posts like the Secretary-General and the Chiefs of Technical Services, of Administration, of Financial Services, and of Archives, who are appointed and paid by the central government.[51] The Mayor is accountable to the municipal council, which is mostly composed of the political party that won the municipal election: the winning party automatically gets half of the municipal council seats, and the other seats are proportionally divided between the remaining elected parties.[52] This results in a municipal council with weak, or no, opposition to the Mayor.[53]

According to Hillebrand, the areas of jurisdiction of the commune are rather vague: culture, public health, environment, urban development, water supply, education and social affairs. In many cases, due to a lack of resources and know-how, municipalities do not fulfill all these areas of responsibility. "[T]he state confers responsibilities which he cannot finance, whereas communities receive responsibilities, which they are not prepared to assume."[54] Crook and Manor, however, state that decentralization has given communes the legal competence to provide public infrastructure and amenities, and administrative services such as birth, death and marriage certification. According to them,

> Urban land use and planning remains for the most part under the control of central ministries, although the communes play an important political role in local "mixed commissions" for the allocation of plots, [...] and may have to bear many of the costs of plot development.
>
> Although the communes share many of these functions with technical ministries and in practice are dependent on them in areas such as health or education for staffing and technical approval, the commune administration thus forms a separate, locally recruited and semi-autonomous agency of government with general authority over its specified territory.[55]

Despite the increased delegation of responsibilities to the commune, municipalities remain closely supervised by the national government, which is represented locally by the prefecture

and sub-prefecture. For example, the municipal budget has to be approved by the Ministry of Interior in Abidjan, unless it is under 100 million CFA, in which case the Prefect can approve it through a departmental committee.[56] This control also exists at the level of the fiscal and financial systems: because of their limited ability to raise taxes, municipalities are highly dependent on funding from the central government, which has decreased considerably since the 1990s.[57] The government requires that 15% of the municipal budget be allocated to investments in infrastructure,[58] and fixes local tax rates nationally. Only fees from licenses and activities like the marketplace are collected by the Mayor's Office, and the rest collected by the Treasury.[59] The handling of tax revenues is also highly dependent on the prefecture, since the communes do not have their own bank or treasury[60]: all municipal revenues are deposited at the prefecture's tax office, who pays the commune's bills after receiving authorization from both the Mayor and the local Treasury official.

Chapter conclusion

The overview of national urban policy in Côte d'Ivoire shows a traditionally centralized method of decision making and funding of urban projects, with recent moves towards decentralization. The centralized system inherited from the French colonial rule, followed by the authoritarian government under Houphouët-Boigny, left little room for public participation in urban development decisions. Furthermore, the continued requirement of high standards for housing prevented the construction of appropriate low-income housing for the country's increasing population. The consequences of these policies are visible today in Aboisso, and partly explain the development of the Sokoura squatter settlement.

Endnotes

[1] Cohen, 1984
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[3] Ibid
[4] Economist Intelligence Unit, 2001
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[8] The World Bank Group, 2002.
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[13] Crook, 1996
[14] Cohen, 1974
[15] Mandel, 1990
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[24] Turner, 1972
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[32] Ibid
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[36]Economist Intelligence Unit, 2001; République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2002; Crook and Manor, 1998
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[39] Cohen, 1974
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[41] Cohen, 1974; Mabogunje, 1989
[43] Cohen, 1974
[44] Hillebrand, 1996
[45] Hillebrand, 1996, page 61
[46] Hillebrand, 1996
[47] Crook and Manor, 1998
[48] Ibid
[49] Crook, 1996
[50] Crook and Manor, 1998
[51] Ibid
[52] Allou, 2002
[53] Crook and Manor, 1998
[54] Kobo, Pierre-Claver, and Hubert Oulaye, 1995, in Hillebrand, 1996, page 12
[55] Crook and Manor, 1998, page 143
[56] this applies to 80% of communal budgets in Côte d'Ivoire (Crook and Manor, 1998)
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[58] N'Guessan, 2002
[59] Crook and Manor, 1998
[60] Ibid

Chapter III

Aboisso: description and planning background

In addition to the impact of national urban policies on Aboisso are the local geographical and historical factors that have shaped the development of the city. This chapter examines these influences in order to clarify the socio-cultural and economic context in which the Sokoura squatter settlement evolved and the upgrading took place.

I. Local conditions

Natural setting

Aboisso is located in the south-east region of Côte d'Ivoire, 110 km from Abidjan, 60 km from the border with Ghana, and about 10 km north of the Aby lagoon.
The commune of Aboisso covers about 9,300 hectares (ha), while the town covers 400 ha. The climate is tropical, with two rainy seasons in June and October and two dry seasons. Average temperatures are between 22° and 32° C (72 to 90 ° F), and annual rainfall is high, with 2,000 mm per year.[1] The natural vegetation is tropical rainforest, although much of it has been cleared for large-scale agriculture. The town of Aboisso is traversed by the Bia River which runs from Ayamé in the north to the Aby lagoon in the south. The older downtown area is located on the east bank of the river, while the west bank is a large residential area served by one main bridge and a footbridge. The terrain in the north part of the town is very hilly, while areas to the south, closer to the lagoon, are flatter and close to the water table.

Demographics

The population of the town of Aboisso grew from about 9,000 in 1965, to 14,000 in 1975 and 21,300 in 1988.[2] According to the most recent census by the Ivorian government in 1998, there are 35,000 people living in the Aboisso Commune, about 26,000 of which are in the town of Aboisso itself.[3] Approximately 7,000 people live in the commune's villages of Ayebo, Assouba and Bakro.[4]
The indigenous population of the Aboisso region are the Agni ethnic group, who are part of the Akan ethnic group. The Agnis are descendants of the Agni-brafès who left the Gold Coast (currently Ghana) at the end of the 17th century after a war with their Denkira neighbors.[5] After conquering local populations, they founded the Agni-Sanwi kingdom in the south-east region

of Côte d'Ivoire.[6] While the Aboisso region is considered traditional Agni country, indigenous Agnis do not make up the majority of the local population because of an important immigration of agricultural workers from other West African countries and the presence of other Ivorian ethnic groups. In 1988, 38% of the Aboisso population were Agni, 28% were Ivorians from other ethnic groups, and about 34% were immigrants, mostly from Burkina Faso, Mali, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria, and Guinea.

Socio-cultural factors

While Agni is considered the local language, residents of Aboisso speak several West African languages depending on their ethnic origin. French is the official language of Côte d'Ivoire and is used for business and administration. While it is predominantly spoken in Aboisso, people's knowledge of French depends mostly on their education level. Many people also speak the West African market language Dioula, which is known in Mali and Burkina Faso as Bambara. According to Agni tradition, there is a King of the Agni-Sanwi who presides over the eight chiefs of canton in the Aboisso region. The cantons and their seats are Affema (Kouakro village), Adoublan (Tiapoun), Krindjabo, Djandji (Ayamé), Attingblelé (Assouba), Essouma (Assinie), Ehotilé (Etuéboué) and Adjouan. Aboisso is included in the Attingblelé canton.[7] The capital of the Agni Sanwi kingdom is in the royal village of Krindjabo, 10 km southeast of Aboisso.
According to Handloff,

> The Agni were particularly successful at assimilating other groups into their political organization, with the result that many people in the southeast trace their ancestry both to Agni chiefdoms and to smaller, distinct societies that fell under Agni control. One mechanism of assimilation was grouping semiautonomous chiefdoms under an Agni paramount chief, who held ultimate authority over his subjects.[8]

The Agni Sanwi kingdom is an example of the coexistence of traditional leadership and a modern political government. This relationship has not been without problems, since, like a few other kingdoms in the country, the Sanwi attempted to secede from Côte d'Ivoire in 1959 and 1969 to gain autonomy from Baoulé domination.[9]

Figure 3: Agni chiefs perform a traditional ceremony at a government-sponsored event in Aboisso

An Agni chief of the Aboisso village rules over the chiefs of the town's neighborhoods. Most neighborhoods have what is considered to be a chief. In a few cases, the chief is also the municipal council representative, and in some neighborhoods like Bois-Blanc, each ethnic group has a leader.

The Agnis were some of the first Ivorians to come into contact with Europeans and to adopt Western cultural practices, and they are also one of the most Christian ethnic groups in the country.[10] Principal religions practiced in Aboisso are Christianity, Islam and Animism. The most influent denomination is the Roman Catholic Church, which runs a mission and the only local radio station in the Commerce quarter, as well as a private high school, grade and nursery school. A large Catholic church is located at the edge of the Administrative quarter and smaller ones are in the Commerce and Rive Gauche neighborhoods. Other denominations are Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Harrist, and Assembly of God, as well as Jehovah's Witnesses. The Muslim population is mostly made up of immigrants from northern West African countries. The town's main mosque is at the edge of the Sokoura neighborhood in Eboikro,[11] and there are many smaller mosques that are located throughout the city.

Economic activities

The economy of Aboisso relies on three main activities: the export of regional agricultural products (coffee, cocoa, palm oil, bananas, rubber trees), local expenditure by residents with exterior funding sources (civil servants and students), and the transportation of goods to and from Ghana.

Local agricultural exports are the most important sector of the national economy, and Aboisso is one of the richest agricultural areas in Côte d'Ivoire. In 1997, it was the 9th largest exporter out of 49 departments in Côte d'Ivoire. Urban activities linked to agriculture suffered as a result of the fall in prices of local products in the 1980s. While businesses like the Unicafé coffee processing factory closed in the late 1980s, others like the Palmindustrie palm oil production company have remained in business.[12] In the 1990s, the SOMIAF mining company also extracted gold in the region and was headquartered on the outskirts of Aboisso.

The economy of the city is also highly dependent on its role as a regional administrative capital. The middle to high income residents working for local companies and the national government, as well as the numerous students who attend school in Aboisso, represent a considerable source of income for housing and service providers.[13] With about 10,000 students in local primary and secondary schools, as well as a teacher's training school, almost half of the city's population are students. Many of them come from outside Aboisso, and require food and lodging during the school year. Because of the lack of boarding facilities, these services are often

provided by families as a source of extra income.
One out of 23 residents of Aboisso is a *fonctionnaire*, or civil servant, compared to an average of 1 in 50 for other prefectoral centers in Côte d'Ivoire.[14] These residents, whose salary is paid by the national government, represent an exterior source of revenue for the region. In addition, people from surrounding villages and smaller towns spend money in Aboisso when they come to town to run errands.

The goods transported to and from the nearby Ghanaian border are for the most part consumer goods like clothes and household items, as well as some food products. The market itself is across the border in Ghana at Noé, but since the Abidjan-Noé road runs through downtown Aboisso, services like food, gasoline and repair shops benefit from the transportation business.[15]

Administration and politics

As the administrative capital of the department, Aboisso houses the regional offices of ministry representatives. The Prefect of Aboisso is the national government representative for the department of Aboisso, which in turn is subdivided into five sub-prefectures (*sous-préfectures*): Aboisso, Adiaké, Ayamé, Maféré and Tiapoum. Each sub-prefecture is headed by a sub-prefect (*sous-préfet*). Created in 1978, Aboisso is the oldest and most important of the three communes in the department (Aboisso, Adiaké and Maféré).

Figure 4: Map of Aboisso prefecture
Source: French Ministry of Foreign Affairs

In addition to government offices are the regional offices of banks and service providers such as the water company SODECI (*Société d'Eau de Côte d'Ivoire*) and electricity provider CIE (*Compagnie Ivoirienne d'Electricité*), a main post office, as well as the regional hospital.

Politically, Aboisso is predominantly a PDCI (*Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire*) region. PDCI was the ruling party of both Presidents Houphouët-Boigny and Bédié, from independence in 1960 until recent elections in 2000, when Laurent Gbagbo of the FPI (Front Populaire Ivoirien) was elected. Both of Aboisso's mayors since the commune's creation in 1980 have been PDCI members.

The Aboisso region was marred by political violence during the early years of independence from France, in what is referred to as "*l'Affaire Sanwi*" ("the Sanwi Affair"). Agni royalty, citing an 1843 protectorate treaty signed with King Philippe II of France, considered that they

had negotiated their status separately with the French as an autonomous kingdom, similarly to the Principality of Monaco.[16] While France had protected the Sanwis during the colonial period, they claimed to have retained their own internal system of government, and therefore wanted the right to decide their own fate independently of Côte d'Ivoire's.[17] After the Agni-Sanwi leaders created their own government on May 3rd 1959, then Prime Minister Houphouët-Boigny warned that any attempt to secede would be severely punished.[18] On May 6th, soldiers were sent to Aboisso and Krindjabo and the king and his ministers were arrested. Many Agnis fled over the border to Ghana, and martial law was imposed. The Ivorian government repressed political activity in the region, violently according to some testimonies,[19] and the refugees' attempts to organize a government in exile in Ghana were in vain. Some stayed abroad, and others eventually returned to Côte d'Ivoire after many years, voluntarily or by forced repatriation.[20] *L'Affaire Sanwi* is still brought up today in the context of national reconciliation talks after the political violence of 1999 and 2000, as an incident on which the government needs to come clean.[21] Because of tense relations between the Houphouët-Boigny government and the Sanwi kingdom there was almost no national investment in the city for almost 15 years.[22] The incident is cited by Aboisso residents as one of the main factors that has held back the development of the city.[23]

II. History of urban development

Economic development

Aboisso evolved from the village of Ebuesso, which was conquered from the Agwa people by the Agnis after they migrated from Ghana.[24] Ebuesso means "on the rocks," as the village was located on the rocky banks of the Bia river.[25] King Amon N'Douffou I of the Sanwi gave French colonials permission to settle at the Ebuesso site,[26] and merchants developed it as a link between the Aby lagoon and the commercial road north to Bondoukou and Kong.[27] Aboisso officially became a French colonial administrative center in 1893.[28]
Mundt sums up the history of Aboisso as follows:

> When the route north [was] secured by a military post at Zaranou in 1897, trade developed rapidly. The administrative capital of the *cercle* was moved there from Assinie in 1903, and the Compagnie Francaise d'Afrique Occidentale (CFAO) opened an office there in 1904; the village was razed, and a new geometric town plan laid out. Aboisso grew [into a dynamic exchange center] with the rubber [...] trade until 1913, when the market price of rubber collapsed [due to competition from other colonies and a decrease in demand from Europe[29]]. With the opening of the railroad north of Abidjan, trade was

> deflected to the west, and Aboisso stagnated. It experienced a temporary revival with the construction of the Ayamé dams in the 1950s, and has been further revived since 1988 due to its location on the new road between Abidjan and Accra (Ghana).[30]

The current Chief of Cabinet at the Mayor's Office, who is also an Agni elder, also emphasizes Aboisso's important role in the exploitation of tropical rainforests to the North of the city. Since in colonial times the Bia River was sailable up to Aboisso, the massive logs were transported by rail from the North, and then floated down the river to the Lagoon, and then to the Abidjan port via the canal at Grand-Bassam. The rail lines were dismounted in 1948 after the demise of the forestry companies.[31]

Physical evolution of the city

The current layout of Aboisso has its origins in the colonial spatial organization of the town. The original village of Ebuesso was located next to the Bia river, at the current site of the Commerce quarter. As French merchants and administrators arrived in the city and took up residence in the quarter, local villagers founded a new neighborhood up the river called Eboikro, after a local elder named "Eboua."[32]

A 1908 French colonial law provided for the creation of villages near the European quarters that were exclusively reserved for the residence of the indigenous people. People received a free title to use the land, but it was not a property title, and land could be claimed at any time by the French authorities.[33] While the application of this law was flexible in its first years of implementation, the development of colonial posts became bolder as the colonial government grew stronger, and in the case of Aboisso, resulted in the razing of the Agni village in 1914 in accordance to the segregation measures required by the colony's Health Services. These measures sought to separate residences of the locals from those of the "European city," following the development plan that had been established in 1911.[34]

The original village was replaced by a grid street layout, and became the Commerce quarter. Until independence in 1960, Eboikro and Commerce were the only two neighborhoods in Aboisso.[35] Roads and drainage canals in the Commerce neighborhood were paved in the 1930s, and garbage collection started in 1938.[36]

In 1967, then sous-prefect Kouakou Akandi ordered the razing of the Eboikro quarter because of the political conflict between the Agni Sanwi kingdom and the central government in the "*Affaire Sanwi,*" and the resident Agni population was dispersed.[37] The area became the Administrative quarter of Aboisso, and it remained very sparsely developed at the edges with large residences (among which is the Prefect's) and prefecture office buildings until the construction of a new city hall and various large company headquarters after 1998. Eboikro was reestablished immediately to the northeast of the old site and is currently one of the main resi-

dential quarters of the city.

The *Travaux Publics* (Public Works) quarter to the South, known familiarly as T.P., was established in the early 1970s, and owes its name to the public works facilities located there. The Rive-Gauche area, on the east side of the river, started in 1964, and has expanded rapidly.[38] Today it is subdivided into over seven different neighborhoods. According to Manlan Bosson, the Bellevue Quarter was intended for the Agni population, while Sokoura was created in the 1960s by the sub-prefect for other ethnic groups and immigrants.[39] There therefore seems to have been an intentional segregation of the city by ethnic group in the past, although newer neighborhoods like Rive Gauche are ethnically integrated.

The SOS neighborhood, named after the "SOS-Enfants" orphanage and private school in the area, was established after the destruction of the original Eboikro quarter as a high-standard neighborhood, and it was paved and provided with water and electricity in the 1970s.[40]

In the past 20 years, the city has grown mostly to the north in Sokoura, to the South in T.P., and in the Rive-Gauche area.

III. Current physical description

Figure 5: View of Aboisso downtown from the south of Commerce quarter

Figure 6: Main North-South road from Lycee area to downtown bus station and market. To the left of the road is an undeveloped section of the Administrative quarter, and to the right is Eboikro-Sanwi

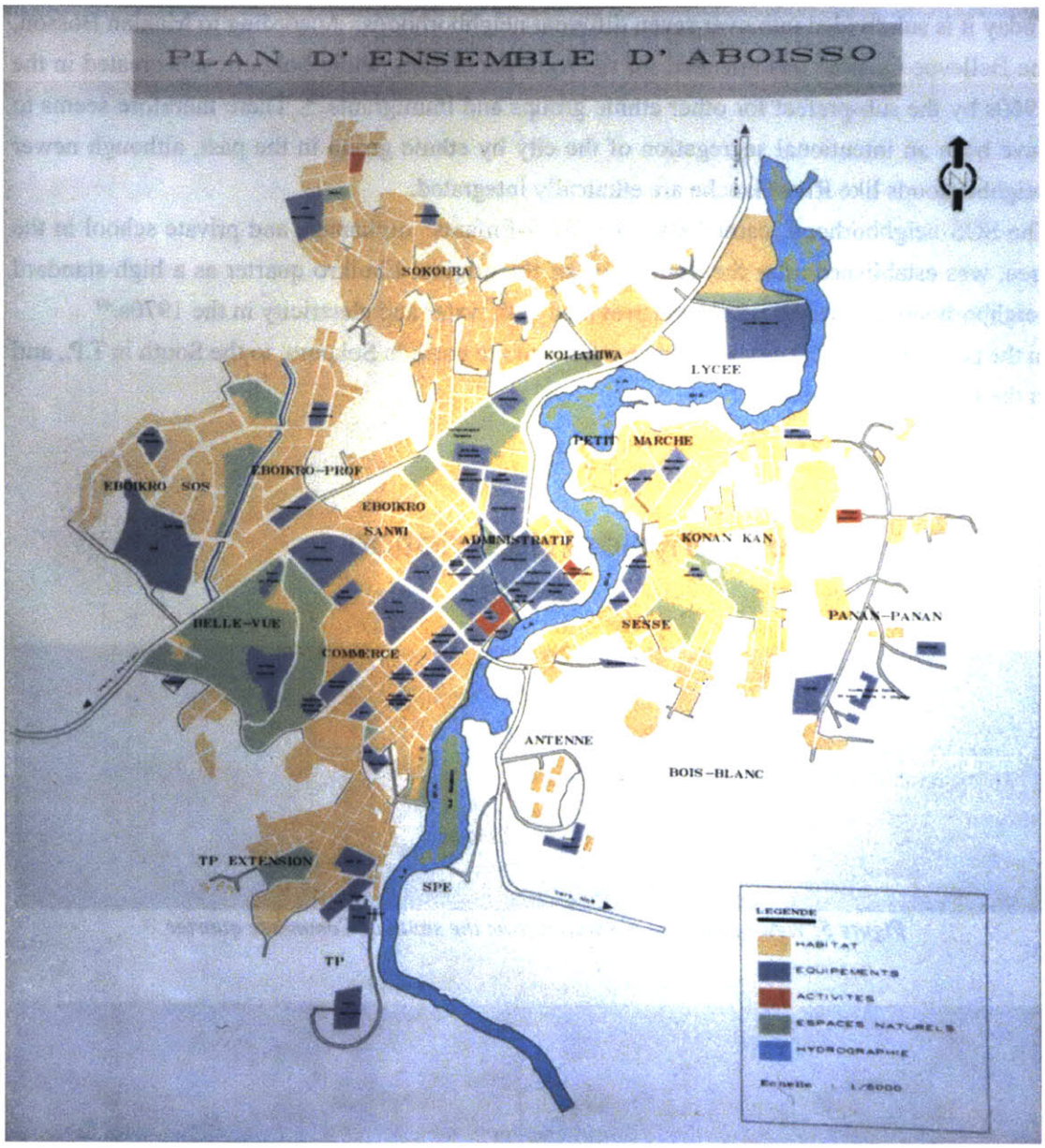


Figure 7: Map of Aboisso
Source: Mayor's Office Technical Services

Today, the city of Aboisso is made up of about 20 neighborhoods on either side of the Bia river, with the following characteristics:

- *Rive Droite* (Right Bank):

Commerce:	mixed use: commercial (central market, retail and services, restaurants and street vendors), administrative and residential
Administratif:	government and commercial offices
Eboikro:	residential, with small shops, public school and Catholic school
Eboikro-Sanwi:	residential
Eboikro-Professionel:	residential
TP (Travaux Publiques):	residential, with small boutiques and a primary school
TP Extension:	residential, with Catholic Seminary school
Plateau:	residential, with a primary school
S.O.S:	high-end residential, SOS orphanage and private school
Bellevue:	high-end residential, public middle school
Sokoura:	residential, small street vendors, primary school
Koliayewa:	residential, primary school
Lycée:	residential; municipal high school and teacher residences

- *Rive Gauche* (Left Bank) also known as "*Derrière l'Eau*" ("Behind the water"):

Sessé:	residential, two hotels and restaurant
Konankan:	residential
Bois-Blanc:	residential, primary school
Panan Panan:	residential, public school, private high school
Petit-Marché:	residential; small unused covered market; boutiques
Antenne:	residential
SPE:	residential

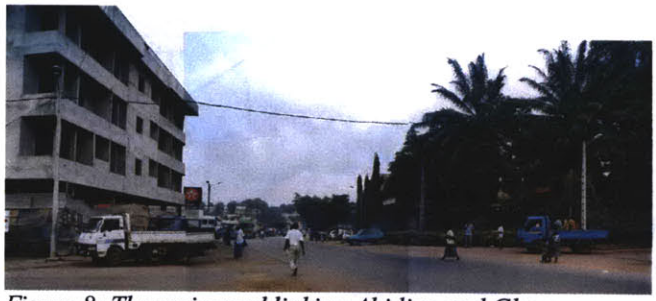


Figure 8: The main road linking Abidjan and Ghana crosses through the downtown. The Commerce quarter is to the left and the Court of Justice in ihe Administrative quarter to the right.

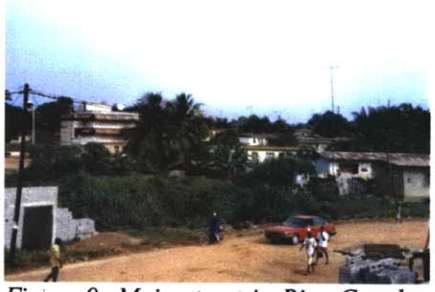
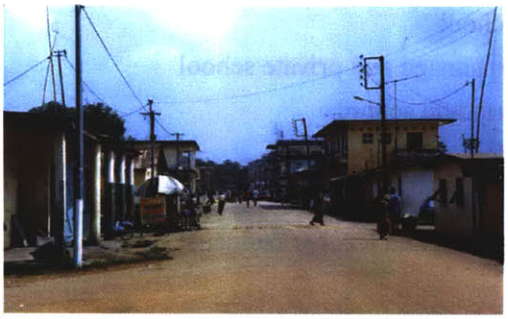


Figure 9: Main street in Rive Gauche, Konankan neighborhood

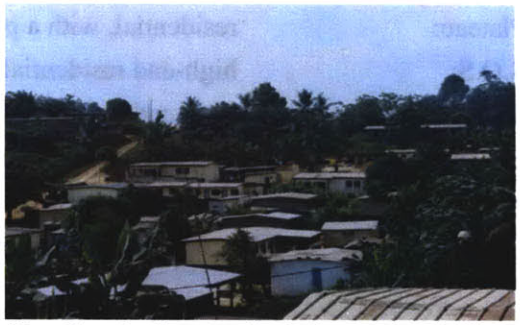
Aboisso neighborhoods

Eboikro-Sanwi : upper middle-class housing arranged around a courtyard and often single family houses

SOS quarter: new single-family housing in villas

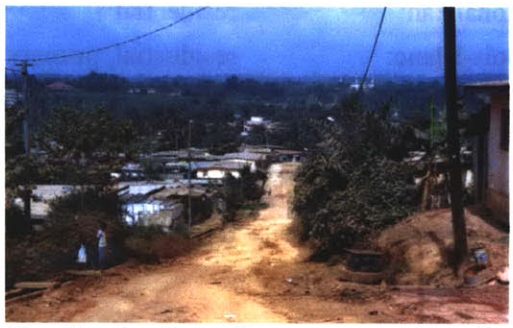


Commerce quarter: shops and residential buildings on paved streets laid out in a grid pattern



Rive Gauche: housing built during the 1990s in new subdivisions

SOS quarter: high standards of roads and amenities, low density residential area



Rive Gauche, Panan Panan: courtyard housing served by dirt road

TP Extension: mud squatter dwellings on officially unallocated land

Sokoura: mostly small family dwellings and a few new housing structures

The following timeline indicates key dates in the political and physical development of Aboisso, in the context of major events in Côte d'Ivoire.

National events	Date	Aboisso events
	1893	Aboisso becomes colonial post
	1900-1913	Rapid growth with the rubber trade
	1914	Original village razed Commerce quarter built
	1959	Beginning of Affaire Sanwi
Independence from France; Houphouët - Boigny becomes president	1960	
	1966	End of Affaire Sanwi
	1967	Destruction of original Eboikro
	1978	Commune of Aboisso created by law
Beginning of decentralization policy	1980	First municipal elections; Karamo Konan elected mayor
Beginning of economic crisis	early 1980s	
	1985	Re-election of Konan Negotiations about Sokoura project begin
	1988	Beginning of Sokoura upgrading
	1990	Elleingand elected National Delegate and Mayor
	1992	End of Sokoura construction
Death of Houphouët-Boigny Bedié becomes president	1993	
Devaluation of CFA currency	1994	
Re-election of Bedié	1995	Re-election of Elleingand
	1997	Departure of AFVP[41] Beginning of FED funding[42]
Bedié ousted by military coup d'etat	1999	
General elections; political violence Gbagbo (FPI)[43] elected president	2000	Re-election of Elleingand

Table 1: Timeline of main political and economic events in Aboisso and Côte d'Ivoire

IV. Planning institutions in Aboisso

In Aboisso and most cities in Côte d'Ivoire, the most powerful influences on urban development are the Mayor and the Prefect. Other important actors are ministry offices and international development agencies.

Mayor's Office

- The Mayor

Etché Elleingand has been the Mayor of Aboisso since 1990, and he is also the region's legislative delegate to the National Assembly. Well connected to politics and institutions in Abidjan, the Mayor is, together with the prefect, the main decision maker on the development of the town.[44] He and the Deputy Mayors are elected as municipal councilors every 5 years, and are in turn elected by their fellow municipal councilors.

- Deputy Mayors (*Adjoints au Maire*):

Since the Mayor resides in Abidjan and usually attends to business in Aboisso about two days per week, the day-to-day mayoral tasks are managed by the four elected deputy mayors. Other key people in the administration are his appointed Chief of Cabinet who is in charge of protocol, and the Secretary-General who manages the administrative staff.[45]

- The Municipal Council

Aboisso has 31 municipal councilors who are elected every five years. The municipal council must approve the annual and tri-annual budgets, discusses local affairs and gives recommendations on the development of the commune.[46] Meetings are called by the Mayor when deemed necessary. The council is divided into commissions, and urban development projects currently fall under the jurisdiction of the Commission on hygiene, health and environment. The municipal council has little influence compared to the strong mayor, and since most of the Council is from the same party as the Mayor, they rarely oppose his policies.[47]

- Technical Services

The Technical Services of the Mayor's Office, headed by a Chief of Technical Services, are in charge of the day-to-day maintenance services provided by the city (garbage collection, cleaning of drainage canals, street sweeping). They also oversee and advise on the planning and implementation of projects such as the construction of new infrastructure, permitting of new buildings, environmental protection and the subdivision of new property lots for the city. The office is headed by the Chief of Technical Services who is a centrally appointed civil servant. The rest of the staff is hired by the Mayor's Office and consist of one engineer/draughtsman, mechanics, drivers and manual laborers.

Prefecture

The Prefect of the department of Aboisso is the appointed local representative of the national government. He coordinates the activities of the sub-prefects and municipalities. The Aboisso municipal budget and all major projects undertaken by the Mayor's Office must be approved by the Minister of the Interior through the Prefect. According to staff at the Mayor's Office, this review by the Prefect and Ministry of Interior is mostly for technical and financial soundness rather than programmatic, and the Prefect cannot veto any projects that are approved in the tri-annual budget.[48]

As the head of the Land Attribution Commission, the Prefect also has the greatest influence on the allocation of land for development. In cases of disagreements between the Prefect and the Mayor about development projects, the ultimate decision is made by the Ministry of Interior.

Ministry of Construction and Urbanism

The engineers and planners in the Aboisso office of this ministry review and approve applications for building permits and major infrastructure projects. According to the local ministry employees, they serve a primarily advisory role to the Mayor's Office for development projects.[49] As the technical advisors to the Prefect on the Land Allocation Commission, the Ministry officials have a significant influence on the development of the city.[50] They also review expenditures of the Mayor's Office for nationally funded projects.

Land Allocation Commission

The Commission (*Commission d'Attribution des Terrains*) processes all applications by private citizens and businesses for plots of land in the Commune of Aboisso and decides on the allocation of parcels. Among the criteria considered by the commission are the type of development intended and the applicant's financial ability to carry out the project. Subjective factors may unofficially influence decisions as well.[51] Land is allocated with the condition that it will be developed within a given deadline of several years, and land titles are given only after satisfactory completion of construction. Undeveloped land can be reallocated to another party by the Commission after 3 years.

The Commission is chaired by the Prefect, and includes representatives from the Mayor's Office, local officials from the Ministry of Construction and Urbanism, Ministry of Agriculture (since the new lots are often on agricultural land), Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Public Works, and the Chief of the Aboisso village or his representatives. About 600 plots of land in the Commune of Aboisso were allocated in the year 2000.[52]

Traditional ethnic leaders

Customary ethnic and neighborhood leaders play a significant role in representing residents of Aboisso in front of government officials and also in resolving disputes between private parties. In some cases these leaders also happen to be elected officials, for example, municipal councilors. Representation can either be along ethnic and religious lines or geographical and by neighborhood. For example, in Sokoura, the imam of the main mosque in the city and the neighborhood chief are both considered representatives of their communities.

BNETD (formerly DCGTx)

The *Bureau National d'Etudes Techniques et du Développement* (*BNTED*), which replaced the *Direction et Contrôle des Grands Travaux* (*DCGTx*) in 1994, is the national planning and infrastructure office for Côte d'Ivoire. They plan and oversee the planning and implementation of major infrastructure projects throughout the country, and were the main technical project managers for the Sokoura upgrading.

International organizations

International organizations have been a major source of funding for new infrastructure in Aboisso over the past 15 years. The main agencies for Aboisso have been USAID for the Sokoura upgrading and new market (mid-1980s to 1998), the European Development Fund through its Coastal Cities Development Project (1994-99), and the African Development Bank (ADB) for primary schools construction and renovation.

V. Urban development issues

Current urban development issues in Aboisso reflect the national trends described in chapter 2, notably the unequal distribution of resources, lack of local funding, and standards that are inaccessible to potential homebuilders. Major problems identified by local government officials and citizens are scarce resources for public investment and services, unemployment, a serious housing shortage, and persistent environmental and sanitation problems.

Housing shortage

In the eyes of Aboisso residents, the short supply of housing and resulting high prices of real estate are one of the most important problems facing the city. Natural, administrative and economic factors are cited as obstacles to increased housing construction: the hilly terrain of

Figure 10: Examples of Aboisso houses

Two storey building downtown

Mud house in TP quarter

New villa in SOS quarter

Aboisso makes construction and infrastructure more expensive than in other parts of the country, there is a backlog of requests for building sites at the level of the local government, and those who have obtained land cannot afford to build on it.

Ayémou Ayémou, a building engineer at the local office of the Ministry of Construction and Urbanism, says "people want to build," but there is an insufficient supply of land plots to satisfy demand. The steep terrain makes many new sites unsafe to build on, and the Mayor's Office does not have the resources to create more suitable building sites. Furthermore, the waiting list for plots of land is long, and some people wait years without being assigned land on which to build.

It is the duty of the Mayor's Office to initiate the creation of new neighborhoods on undeveloped land in the commune.[53] The subdivision of lots is done by the Mayor's Office Technical Services and a hired consultant. After final approvals by the local representatives and the Abidjan office of the Ministry of Construction and Urbanism, the Mayor's Office submits the new subdivision plans to the Land Attribution Commission. The whole process takes anywhere from ten months to five years.[54]

Even plots of land that are subdivided and allocated often remain undeveloped or only partially constructed. The lack of amenities such as roads, electricity and water lines makes it difficult or undesirable for people to undertake any construction.[55] Also, the economic recession in Côte d'Ivoire has meant that people can no longer afford to build. The usual procedure for individual developers is to begin construction once enough money is gathered to build the foundation and to purchase some cement and bricks. Oftentimes, however, the builder runs out of funds and the partially mounted walls of the house sit idle and become overgrown with weeds until enough money is gathered to continue construction.

Lack of state investment

Important cutbacks in the national funding of municipal projects have had a significant negative impact on Ivorian communes since the late 1980s.[56] Between 1987 and 1992, total national government grants to communes dropped 30%,[57] and for Aboisso, they dropped 45%.[58]

In addition to this decrease in national funding, local professionals point out that the government has historically not adequately invested in Aboisso. The rotating Independence Day cel-

ebrations were cut short in 1979 before the city could serve as host, and it therefore did not receive the large-scale infrastructure that benefited many other regional capitals. The *Affaire Sanwi*, in which local Agni Sanwi insurrections were violently repressed by the central government in the 1960s, is also cited by local residents as a factor explaining the lack of government investment in Aboisso during the 1970s.

According to local administrators, the lack of infrastructure has held back Aboisso's development as an administrative center: many government ministries seeking to open a local office in town have been unable to do so because of the lack of office space, and as a result the region is less well served than others. Contrary to other regional capitals in Côte d'Ivoire where the national government usually owns the facilities it occupies, 90% of ministry representatives in Aboisso currently rent their office space.[59] The shortage of housing also makes it difficult for the government employees to find a place to live if they are assigned to Aboisso.

Given the limited financial resources of the municipal government, current Mayor Elleingand affirms that the national government need to fund major infrastructure investments in Aboisso. However, these investments are still lacking.[60]

Limited municipal resources

Municipal budgets in Côte d'Ivoire have suffered as a consequence of the drastic reductions in national subsidies over the past 20 years, due to political and economic turmoil. The state subsidy to Aboisso dropped from 104 million CFA in 1981 ($208,000), to 38.3 million CFA in 2001 ($76,000). Given the 50% devaluation of the CFA currency in 1993, this represents a decrease of approximately 130% in 20 years (Appendix 1).

Today the majority of the municipal revenue comes from taxes collected by the Mayor's Office. These taxes are from the marketplace, local licensing of transportation and services, and small retailers with less than 5 million CFA in revenues. Taxes on property, trading licenses, and from retailers with more than 5 million CFA in revenues are paid by the taxpayers directly to the prefecture treasury.[61] In 2001, the Aboisso municipality received 37.5 million CFA from national taxes, 41.8 million in subsidies from the government, and 162.7 million in taxes collected locally by the municipality. Funding from international development agencies represented almost a doubling of the municipal budget in many years since 1985 (Appendix 1).

State budget subsidies are proportional to the population of the Commune, and the government fixes national tax rates for retailers, with the exception of Abidjan that has higher rates.[62] The Mayor's Office therefore has little control over the amount of tax money that they can collect. Mayors of cities in the interior of Côte d'Ivoire have been lobbying to reduce the amount of money allocated to the populous Abidjan communes, which are already significantly equipped with infrastructure.[63]

An unequal allocation of resources

The effects of the national "double or nothing" policy described in Chapter 2 are also visible in Aboisso. While the policy has been attenuated since the 1960s, the Mayor's Office has concentrated resources in the downtown area and aims to create a high-end neighborhood with European style standards in the "SOS" quarter at the entrance to the town.[64] "SOS" is in fact considered by city officials as the "*quartier résidentiel*," or residential neighborhood, of Aboisso, referring to the large villa-type houses there. With the vast majority of the population clearly living in the other neighborhoods of Aboisso, the term "residential" refers only to high-end housing. The Rive-Gauche area, which is in fact predominantly residential, is considered a "*quartier dortoir*," or bedroom community, that people return to at night after working downtown during the day.[65] According to Francis Vanga, an engineer and planner at the Mayor's Office, there was an effort under the former Mayor Karamo in the 1980s to also make the Eboikro neighborhood a "*quartier de haut standing*," or high-class neighborhood. This effort was however abandoned under Mayor Elleingand due to complaints by residents. A decline in the country's economy also made it unlikely that the vision could be fulfilled.[66]

An examination of the number of applications for building permits in Aboisso shows a drastic reduction in applications over the past 25 years. According to Ayémou Ayémou of the local office of the Ministry of Construction and Urbanism, the decrease in applications since 1999 was due to political unrest and a deterioration in the economy after the 1999 coup d'état. During that time people were also reluctant to apply because the local office director tended to reject many of the applications.[67] The numerous construction sites in the city, however, suggest that much of the construction is illegal because it doesn't meet official standards.

According to the Third Deputy Mayor, the illegal constructions should in principle be destroyed, but the Mayor's Office is reluctant to do so because the construction represents a considerable investment for owners in light of the poverty of the population and high cost of housing in Aboisso.[68]

Year	# of applications
1976	143
1980	152
1985	42
1990	12
1995	14
1999	35
2000	9
2001	3

Table 2: Building permit applications in Aboisso, select years between 1976-2001[69]
Source: Ministry of Construction and Urbanism, Aboisso

Environmental degradation

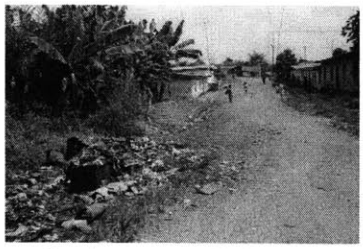
Another major concern of Aboisso residents is the poor environmental conditions in town. This includes environmental degradation like soil erosion and water pollution, as well as public health hazards like inadequate garbage collection, the absence of a sewer system, and overflowing or non-existent septic tanks.

Improving the environment was a major campaign issue for current Mayor Elleingand during his 1990 political campaign, and it created the impetus for his election.[70] While significant environmental improvements have been made in Aboisso during his term in office, important pollution, sanitation and health problems persist. Residents routinely complain that poor environmental conditions cause considerable health problems, such as the typhoid and cholera outbreaks in 2000-2001. According to Monique N'Guetta and Solange Brou, both social workers at the Aboisso Social Center, improving sanitation is the most urgent priority for the town. They stress the need to improve garbage collection and the disposal of waste water in order to reduce the incidence of diseases that people do not have the money to treat.[71] Many residents also place a priority on having roads paved, in order to reduce the incidence of dust-borne diseases and soil erosion.

Chapter summary

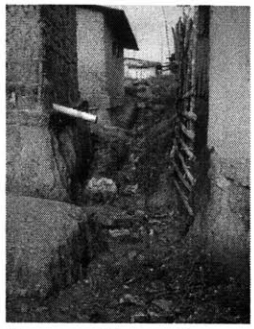
The review of historical and current influences on the urban development of Aboisso in Chapters 2 and 3 shows that although the city is located in a relatively wealthy region of the country, its growth has been slower than similar towns in Côte d'Ivoire because of geographical constraints and the political strife that led to a lack of national investment in local infrastructure in the 1970s. As the national economic situation in the country worsened with the crash of agricultural prices in the 1980s, urban development responsibilities were increasingly delegated to municipal authorities with dwindling budgets. Today, despite limited means and the continued financial and administrative dependence of municipalities on the national government, city residents look to the Mayor's Office to improve amenities and services in the city.

Figure 11: Persistent environmental problems in Aboisso



Inadequate trash disposal

Untreated wastewater leakage



Sewage disposal

From a socio-cultural perspective, the native Agni population of Aboisso has a long history in the region, and although they dominate local political life, they no longer represent the majority of the commune's residents who are African immigrants and Ivorians from other ethnic groups. As in the rest of the country, housing shortage is a major concern for the population of Aboisso. Since the 1970s, the Sokoura squatter settlement housed a large part of the growing immigrant population that could not find any affordable housing in the area.

While the standard of living varies considerably between the different neighborhoods of the city, sanitation and environmental problems are pervasive throughout the city and residents look to the municipal authorities to provide them with infrastructure and services. The USAID upgrading of Sokoura represented a large investment in the infrastructure of the city, especially compared to the limited means of the municipal government, but the investment was limited to the area of the squatter settlement. The following chapter explains the level of intervention and methods used during the upgrading project.

Endnotes

[1] compared to 1100mm/yr in Boston, 600mm/yr in Paris, and 760mm/yr in Nairobi
[2] DCGTx, 1995
[3] DCGTx, 1995. The Adjoint Mayors however estimate the actual population of the commune to be about 60,000.
[4] DCGTx, 1995; Allou, 2002
[5] Ministère de l'Education Nationale, 1962, page 27
[6] Aboisso Mayor's Office, 1990s; Manlan, interview 2002
[7] Fang and Watkins, 1996
[8] Handloff, 1991
[9] Handloff, 1991. The Baoulés are the politically dominant ethnic group in Côte d'Ivoire, and the ethnic group of former president Houphouët-Boigny
[10] Mundt, 1997
[11] The mosque was built before the formation of the Sokoura squatter settlement.
[12] Eco Loc Tref, 1997
[13] Ibid
[14] A *fonctionnaire* is a salaried civil servant or government worker, including teachers and workers in public works and services.
[15] Eco Loc Tref, 1997
[16] Diabaté, 1986, page 92
[17] Diabaté, 1986, page 92; Library of Congress, 1991
[18] Diabaté, 1986
Having previously been a member of the French National Assembly for fourteen years and a minister in the French government, Houphouët-Boigny became Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire in 1958 before being elected without opposition as President in 1960 (Mundt, 1995)
[19]Le Jour, 2001
[20] The military government that took power from Ghana's President Nkrumah in a coup in February 1966 repatriated leaders of the Sanwi movement to Côte d'Ivoire in May, in an effort to ensure good relations with Côte d'Ivoire (Diabaté, 1986)
[21] Forum de la Nation pour la Réconciliation Nationale en Côte d'Ivoire, 2001; Le Jour, 2001

[22] an official reconciliation took place in Yamoussoukro in 1986 (Eco Loc Tref, 1997)
[23] Famien, 2002 Interview; Tanoh, interview 2002
[24] Commune d'Aboisso, undated
[25] Commune d'Aboisso, undated; Bosson, interview 2002
[26] Aboisso Mayor's Office, undated
[27] Mundt, 1995
[28] Bosson, interview 2002
[29] Kipré, 1985, page 173
[30] Mundt, 1995
[31] Bosson, interview 2002
[32] Ibid
[33] Kipré 1985 vol. 1, page 137
[34] Ibid
[35] Allou, interview 2002; Famien interview 2002
[36] Kipré, 1985
[37] Bosson, interview 2002; Ayémou, interview 2002; Allou, interview 2002
[38] Bosson, interview 2002
[39] Bosson, interview 2002; Famien, interview 2002
[40] Allou, Famien. Interview 2002
[41] Association Française des Volontaires du Progrès: French volunteer organization who managed community development for the Sokoura project
[42] FED (Fonds Européen de Développement): European Development Fund
[43] Front Populaire Ivoirien. This is the first non-PDCI government in Côte d'Ivoire's 40-year history
[44] This is the case for most Ivorian mayors (Hillebrand, 1996)
[45] In 1987 Fraternité Hebdo, an Ivorian newspaper, reported that 74 out of the 125 Ivorian Mayors of cities outside of Abidjan actually lived in Abidjan. Forty percent of Ivorian mayors also held office as legislative deputies or ministers (Crook, 1996)
[46] Attahi, 1996
[47] Crook, 1996
[48] N'Guessan, interview 2002
[49] The former director of the Aboisso office complained that they were at times not sufficiently consulted on the technical aspect of projects like the new bus station.
[50] Ayémou, interview 2002
[51] Ibid
[52] Report from Aboisso Municipal Council meeting of March 17, 2001. This figure is most likely much higher than the annual average for Aboisso.
[53] Ayémou, interview 2002
[54] Ibid
[55] Ibid
[56] Crook, 1996
[57] Ibid
[58] Eco Loc Tref, 1997
[59] Ayemou, interview 2002; Bosson, interview 2002
[60] Elleingand, interview 2002
[61] N'Guessan, interview 2002
[62] Ibid
[63] Ibid
[64] SOS refers to the "SOS Enfants" orphanage and school that is located in the neighborhood
[65] Allou, interview 2002
[66] Vanga, interview 2002
[67] Ayémou, interview 2002
[68] Allou, interview 2002
[69] Ayémou, interview _2002
[70] Galetic, 1998
[71] Brou and N'Guetta, interview 2002.

Chapter IV

Upgrading Sokoura: goals, implementation and results

I. USAID Program Goals

The Sokoura project was funded under the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Housing Loan Guarantee (HG) Program, and managed by its Regional Housing and Urban Development Office (RHUDO). The Housing Loan Guarantee program took the form of five consecutive but discrete cycles in Côte d'Ivoire between 1967 and 1992. The goal of the HG programs was to upgrade housing and shelter and increase household access to homeownership. Aboisso was one of eighteen cities to receive funding under the fourth loan program (HG-004), between 1980 and 1992. The total loan funding of HG-004 was $20 million with $5 million participation from the Ivorian government, and $11.8 million in loan interest revenue.[1]

RHUDO's approach in its first two programs had been to fund the construction of individual houses that would be accessible to middle-income households. However, after the newly created housing proved to be accessible only to higher income populations, they adopted alternative approaches to address the need for low-income housing, such as sites and services, and eventually income-generating infrastructure, private sector involvement in municipal services, and revenue increasing activities like better municipal management.
Also, in response to increased awareness about the lack of services, infrastructure and housing development in the interior of the country, RHUDO attempted for the first time in HG-004 to fund urban projects outside of Abidjan, a move which coincided with the Ivorian government's shift towards a more decentralized system of administration during the 1980s.

The foci of the HG-004 were: to continue the innovative shelter and services programs started under previous programs, such as appropriate construction standards for low-income housing, community upgrading and project cost recovery; to strengthen local capacity to implement and maintain urban development projects through management training programs; to provide income-generating revenue and infrastructure to local populations; and to encourage the involvement of local private firms in the projects.[2]
Because community participation by both residents and government officials was identified as important for cost recovery and sustainability during the previous housing guarantee program,

community input was sought as early as possible in HG-004, and therefore in the Sokoura project.

RHUDO listed the objectives for Aboisso as: "improve neighborhood hygiene and sanitation; help solve existing environmental problems; upgrade informally constructed housing; improve access to the Sokoura quarter; stimulate economic activity and raise incomes; assist municipal authorities in responding to public needs more effectively."[3]

In addition to the neighborhood upgrading in Aboisso, HG-004 provided for the construction of a municipal market and truck garage, the purchase of dumpsters, equipment repair, and training for municipal agents.[4] In the Sokoura neighborhood, the goals were to upgrade housing conditions and improve access to the area by providing primary and secondary road infrastructure. It was the first upgrading project that the Ivorian government agreed to undertake for an area occupied exclusively by illegal squatters.[5]

II. Project Background

Management and Costs

The initial agreements for the project were signed by the Construction and Urbanism Ministry and DCGTx in 1988. Local management of the project was assigned to the Mayor's Office, AFVP, and the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Construction, and the upgrading work started in 1991.

The principal project executors were:

- Aboisso Commune (Mayor's Office and its Technical Services)
- *Direction et Contrôle des Grands Travaux* (DCGTx) in Abidjan, which managed the technical aspects of the project
- Ministry of Construction and Urbanism, represented by its local Aboisso office, which provided planning and regulatory expertise
- *Association Française des Volontaires du Progrès* (AFVP), who acted as a local intermediary between the authorities and population, and coordinated community organization and development
- Residents and community leaders of Sokoura

The initial cost of the Sokoura project was US$ 540,000 (270 million CFA).[6] Final costs ran at about $1,090,000 (545 million CFA), of which $734,000 (367 million CFA) were from USAID, $240,000 (120 million CFA) from the French Cooperation Fund (*Fonds d'Action et de Coopération*), $80,000 (40,000,000 CFA) from the Commune of Aboisso, and $36,000 (18 million CFA) from the Ivorian government.[7]

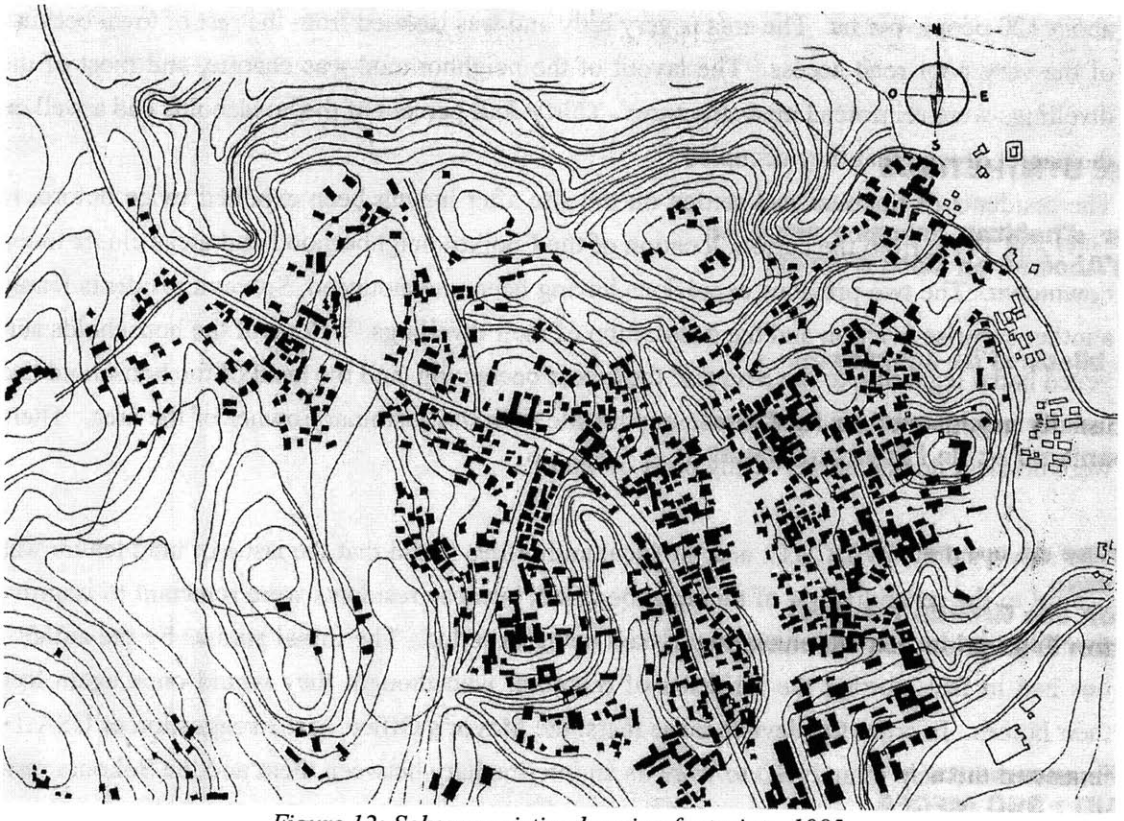


Figure 12: Sokoura existing housing footprints, 1985
Source: Ministère de la Coopération and AFVP

Neighborhood Study

According to Mamadou Diomande, Sokoura was chosen as a pilot project because of the moderate size of its population and surface area, its proximity to Abidjan, a population growth lower than Abidjan's, and the fact that the population of Sokoura were squatters who had already been displaced twice to accomodate the expansion of the city.[8]

The census done in 1988 by DCGTx and the Technical Services of the Mayor's Office as an initial study of the neighborhood found that Sokoura housed about 7,000 residents out of a total of 21,000 in the city of Aboisso.[9] The neighborhood stood out from other parts of the city by its predominantly immigrant population: 70% of residents were non-Ivoirian from at least 10 different nationalities, among which were mainly Malians, Burkinabès, Nigerians, Ghanaians.[10] While the native Agnis of Aboisso are predominantly Christian, most of Sokoura's inhabitants are Muslim, and the social structure of the neighborhood relied heavily on community leaders and organizations such as the imam,[11] religious figures, and koranic schools. Most heads of households were farmers or traders, and women made up the majority of merchants at the city's market. The average household size was of 10 people, and 42% of them had a household income of less than 35,000 CFA/month.[12]

The Sokoura site covered about 50 ha of the city's 400 ha, and had a high population density of

about 120 people per ha. The area is very hilly and was isolated from the rest of town because of the very poor road access. The layout of the neighborhood was chaotic, and most of the dwellings were reinforced mud structures. Thirty-four percent of the households had a well on the parcel of land that they occupied.[13]

The residents of Sokoura had settled on the site after having been expelled twice before, in 1967 and 1977, from the current location of the Eboikro neighborhood and areas closer to the downtown. The two previous expulsions having been unannounced, Sokoura residents feared another surprise eviction and the destruction of their dwellings.[14] None of the households surveyed had a legal title to the land that they were occupying, and the head of the household had usually negotiated their right to occupy the site with the customary owner of the area. There were no clear demarcations of any plots of land.[15]

The surveys done by DCGTx and the local authorities found that the issue of land tenure was central to the rehabilitation of the neighborhood, because residents were reluctant to improve dwellings on land from which they risked being expelled. The initial studies by the authorities had in fact worried the residents of Sokoura, who thought they would once again lose their homes. In order to alleviate these fears, the Mayor's Office, at the suggestion of USAID, requested the help of an NGO to work as an intermediary between them and the Sokoura residents. The French Association of Volunteers of Progress (*Association Française des Volontaires du Progrès,* or *AFVP*), a French volunteer organization, was selected in the absence of the U.S. Peace Corps in Côte d'Ivoire at the time. According to a letter from the Mayor's Office, the main role of the volunteer organization would be to "have the project accepted by the population."[16]

III. Project Implementation

Land parcelling

DCGTx's evaluation of the status of land in Sokoura identified three main issues: the need for replacement or compensation for agricultural land, compensation to the 15 traditional chiefs who claimed property rights to the land, and the identification of any existing land titles (there was only one title, owned by a Deputy Mayor and slated for a private college).[17]

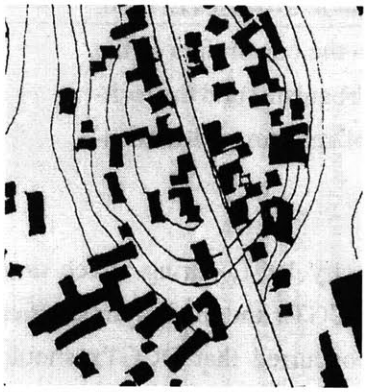
With the regular negotiations that took place between residents and implementing institutions, the project plan changed constantly. Technical design and construction work was carried out by the Mayor's Office and DCGTx, while community development was implemented by the AFVP volunteer and an Ivorian counterpart hired by AFVP, whose presence was crucial in understanding and accommodating unexpected cases and the often complex family situations of the neighborhood's inhabitants. The subdivision of the land was also delayed by conflicts over procedure, because part of the proposed plan would have prevented the development of

land owned by the Mayor.

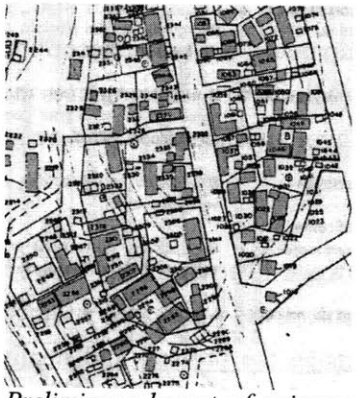
In the end, the parcellation of Sokoura resulted in the creation of 638 plots of land, of which 496 were occupied by current residents, 77 were vacant and in currently built areas, and 65 were in new unoccupied sites at the periphery of the neighborhood. The plots of land ranged from 200 m^2 to 350 m^2, while the required minimum plot area in the rest of Aboisso is 400 m^2. A total of 180 households were relocated for the new subdivisions, or 27% of the 660 existing households in Sokoura. Out of these, 90 families were displaced by new road construction, 50 moved because they had been sharing a parcel with another household, and 40 had to leave sites that were unsuitable for construction. This high number of displacements is explained by the fact that the hilly terrain required the placement of inhabitants and infrastructure on more level surfaces.[18]

The establishment of the parcelling plan was an important step in establishing the legitimacy of the project, because inhabitants began to truly believe in the project. It also allowed project managers to identify omissions and mistakes in the initial census. Over the course of the year in 1990, at least 4 versions of the neighborhood plan and road system were drafted.[19]

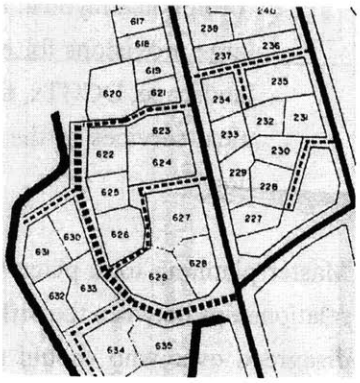
Figure 13: New subdivisions preserve existing housing
Source: DCGTx in Ministère de la Coopération and AFVP



Existing squatter dwelling conditions: houses footprints and access through single dirt road



Preliminary layout of primary and secondary roads, and parcellation according to existing dwelling layout



Final development: main roads paved (solid line), secondary roads (dotted line) and land parcels

In terms of management and implementation, the AFVP volunteer reported a lack of coordination at the beginning of the project, which improved with the creation of a regular working group involving all parties. There was a great deal of solidarity within the neighborhood in part due to the creation of the youth association that encouraged elders and committees to organize. Eventually, the volunteer found himself caught between being part of the community and satisfying the Mayor's Office. For example, the Mayor claimed that the AFVP volunteer's role as treasurer for the youth group prevented him from being a disinterested party in the project. The

Mayor's Office also suspended the activities of the Ivorian community developer in response to his political activity in favor of the opposition, and requisitioned the project's car for campaign work. The president of AFUAS actively campaigned against Mayor Konan in the 1990 municipal elections.[20]

Master planning

The master plan was drawn up by DCGTx, taking into account the implementation of the new land allotment system. Because DCGTx considered this phase of the project to require a high level of technical understanding, residents were not included in the process. However, community priorities identified by AFVP through meetings and interviews were taken into account, such as requests for a school, an infirmary, and a sports field.[21]

The plan defined roads, infrastructure, zoning, identification of current and new settlements, the plan of action, and the revised budget.[22] According to AFVP, the master plan represented a considerable step forward made by the project:

> by creating a development plan and implementation measures that were no longer based on the classical development principles used in Côte d'Ivoire (orthogonal layouts, lot sizes of a minimum of 400 m², large expanses of road, large provisions for equipment), but rather according to the constraints of the landscape, DCGTx, the [Ministry of Construction and Urbanism] and the technical services of the Mayor's Office showed a sense of realism and innovation.[23]

Master planning took place between February 1990 and February 1991, during which time relationships between the different parties were often strained: DCGTx and the Mayor's Office disagreed over who should manage the project, and finally concurred that DCGTx should assume the role. In the spring of 1990, relations between AFVP and the Mayor's Office deteriorated and the two rarely interacted. The rapport however remained good between AFVP and DCGTx, which allowed the land parcellation process to continue. Mayor Konan officially asked for the AFVP volunteer to be replaced in December 1990, but was voted out of office before any replacement could take place.

The municipal elections in Côte d'Ivoire at the end of 1990 were a determining turning point in the implementation of the project: the AFVP relationship with the Mayor's Office took a turn for the better after the Sokoura electorate, which represented 30% of Aboisso's voters, helped elect a new mayor, Etché Elleingand.[24]

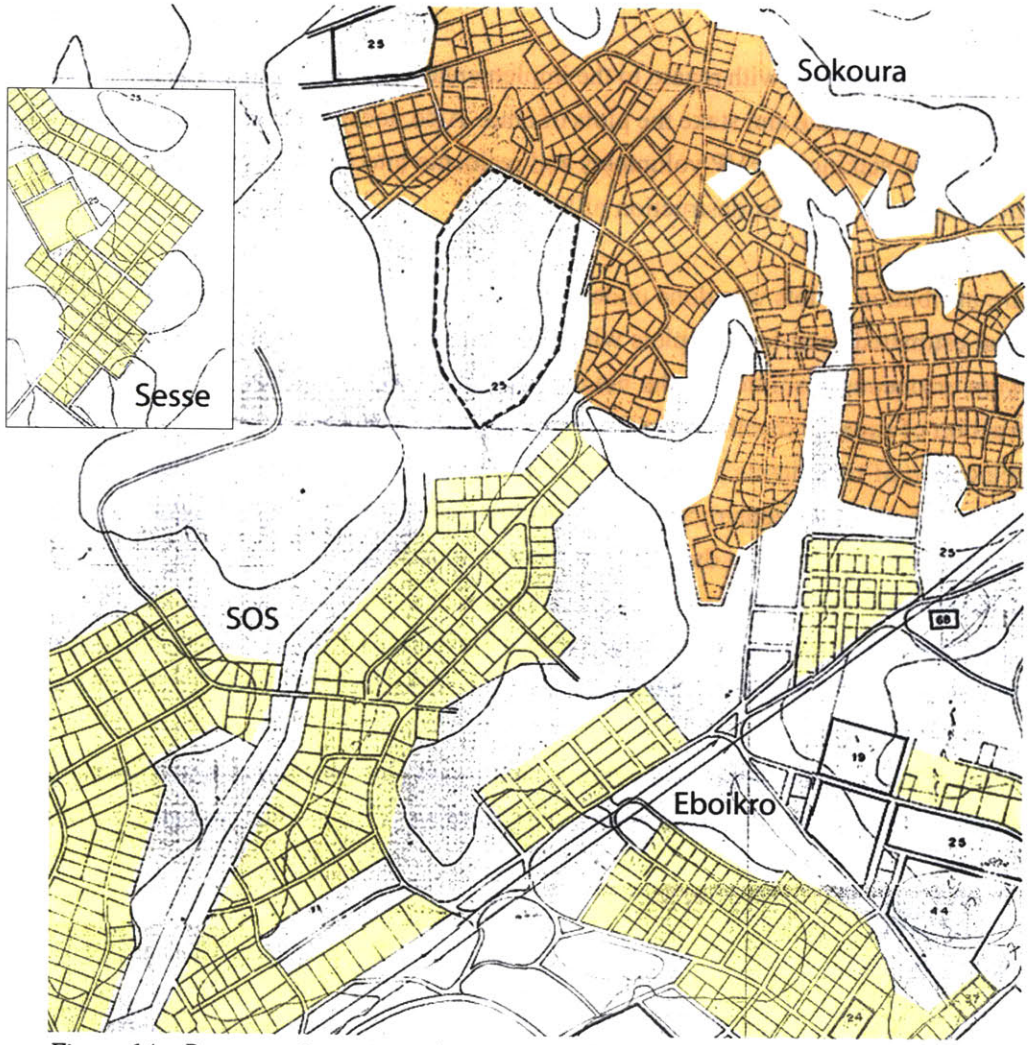


Figure 14: By preserving existing housing in Sokoura, the upgrading created plots in a variety of sizes and shapes, while other neighborhoods use regular orthogonal layouts. Eboikro and Sesse have similarly sized lots, while SOS, as a high-end neighborhood, is divided into larger parcels.
Source: DCGTx, 1995 modified by author

Implementation: land attribution and relocations

A crucial part of implementation was the ability of project managers to adapt to the changing needs of the project and to respond to the actions and needs of the inhabitants.

Together, the project team and the Mayor's Office determined the costs of plots of land. For a 350 m² plot, the purchase costs were 90,000 CFA for a site on a paved road, 70,000 CFA on a dirt road, and 50,000 CFA with pedestrian access only. These prices were considerably lower than the market rates for land in other parts of Aboisso, because they were subsidized by USAID. The neighborhood chief played an important role in getting the population to pay for their plots of land. The money from the sales went to the Mayor's Office to defray the cost of demarcating the land parcels and providing public services, and to be reinvested in the

neighborhood.

Community participation with regard to the implementation of the project took the form of help by AFUAS to demarcate and stake the plots of land. Also, local artisans helped make the 2,000 markers for the staking. AFVP volunteers and residents intervened to resolve problems of lot demarcations that called for destruction of homes.

The pre-attribution of lots was done under the management of the Mayor's Office. There was an initial estimated need for 720 plots with 620 available. New lots were created for families that were erroneously omitted in the neighborhood survey, as well as to prevent any further construction of squatter dwellings on the edges of the neighborhood.

The relocation of inhabitants affected by the new infrastructure began in June 1991, with the clearing of the new lots, construction of temporary dwellings, moving of residents, and finally the construction of permanent dwellings in the new locations.

A solidarity fund was set up by the Mayor's Office to help defray the cost of relocation and reconstruction for displaced households, with contributions from different ethnic groups in Sokoura as well as from other residents of Aboisso. A total of 287,000 CFA ($574) was collected by August 1991.

In order to encourage rebuilding of dwellings on the new plots, measures were taken by authorities to alleviate costs and facilitate approval of building permits. For example, building per-

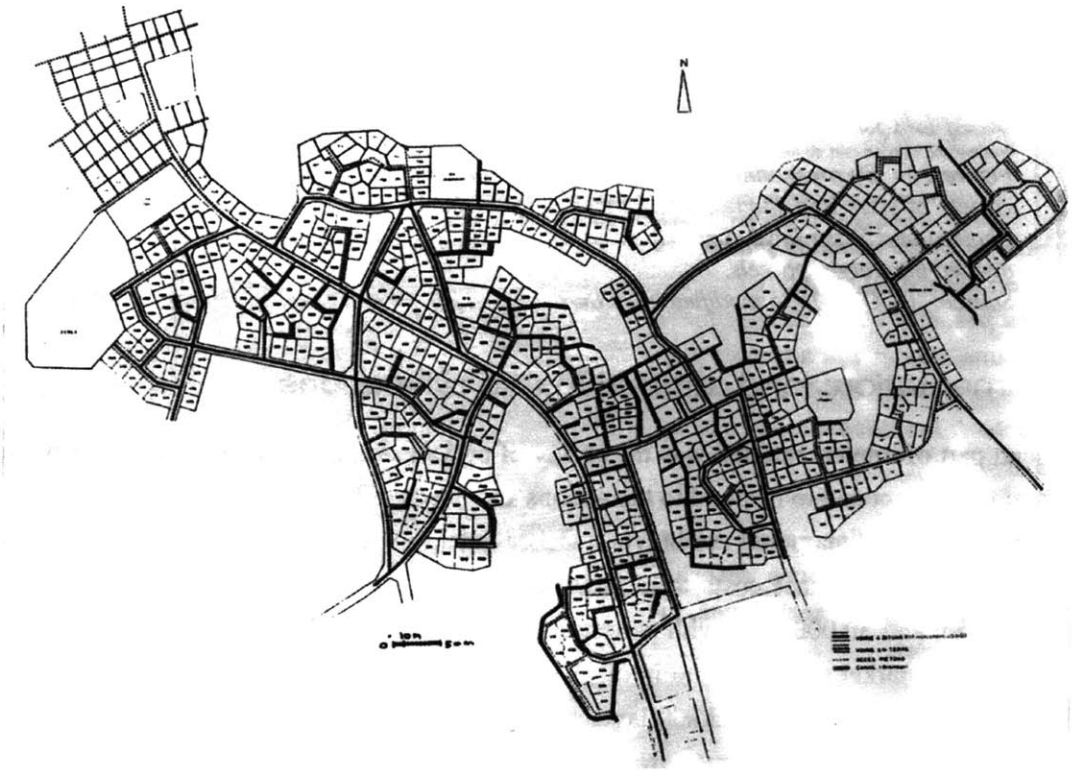


Figure 15: Final road and parcellation plan
Source: DCGTx, 1990

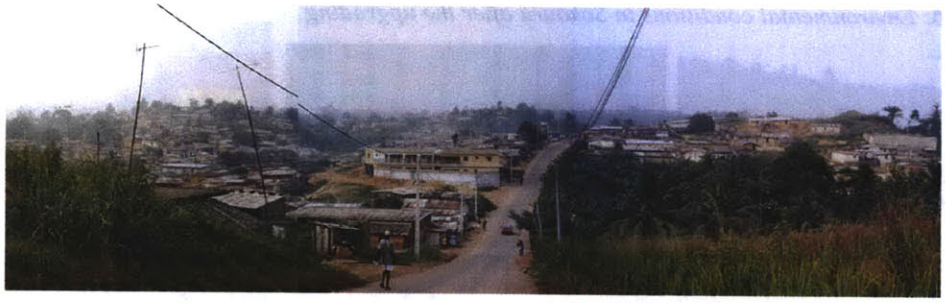


Figure 16: A 2002 view of Sokoura shows smaller and older mud houses juxtaposed with a new multi-storey building

mits were issued for 10 houses at a time instead of individually, and use of appropriate technology such as earth bricks instead of cement was allowed.

Housing and environmental upgrading

After addressing the issue of land tenure, AFVP sought to organize residents to improve living conditions in the neighborhood. The goals identified by the neighborhood were the improvement of health, sanitation and environmental conditions, the upgrading of dwellings, the support of economic activities, and the encouragement of social and cultural activities.[25]

In terms of housing improvements, the legalization of land tenure had encouraged residents to invest in their dwellings, and after construction they started to collect building materials to begin reconstruction or home improvements. A model home was built with the help of the AFUAS youth group to demonstrate the use of earth bricks, and equipment like brick presses were purchased to encourage their use.[26] Several Sokoura residents volunteered to incorporate these techniques in building their new homes, but ten years after the end of the project construction, there seems to be no sign of housing built using the earth brick technology, most likely due to a lack of technical support and funding.

According to Francis Vanga of the Municipality's Technical Services, the rebuilding of houses in Sokoura has not happened as quickly as authorities would have liked despite allowances made by authorities on construction standards and requirements, like an alleviated construction permit process. According to him, this is due to the persistent poverty of the residents, and also the fact that as non-natives, they are reluctant to invest in building a house because they plan to return to their home countries in the long term. In 2002, housing in the Sokoura neighborhood is a mix of mud-based structures, concrete houses, and a few multi-storey apartment and studio buildings. Without any financial or technical support, the upgrading of housing has therefore slowly been taking place under initiative of the residents or investors from other parts of Aboisso. There have however not been any follow-up surveys on any turnover of the population or the upgrading of housing since the completion of land allocation.

An improvement of health and environmental conditions took place through the involvement of the AFUAS youth group in environmental education, for example, regarding proper trash

Figure 16: Environmental conditions in Sokoura after the upgrading

Soil erosion

Sokoura courtyard

Showers, trash and uncovered wells behind houses

disposal in the neighborhood. AFUAS was also active in the organization of social programs like summer classes and sports tournaments for children in Sokoura. However, without any support from the local authorities, these activities gradually ceased soon after the departure of the AFVP volunteers.

IV. Project Evaluation

AFVP volunteers reported that most residents appreciated the land allocation because it had put to rest their fears of another eviction. The neighborhood restructuring made them more interested in improving their living conditions and addressing issues like the need for services like schools and an infirmary. According to AFVP accounts, Sokoura residents did not really believe in the upgrading project and feared displacement until the first steps of its implementation, after which they started to take part in meetings about the upgrading of the neighborhood.

The lack of coordination between the people and institutions resulted in considerable delays and readjustments in the project. For example, the roads that were initially cleared were not wide enough for the levelers in later phases of construction. Loads had to be widened, more families relocated, and more plots of land provided. The environmental effects of the project were also underestimated, such as soil erosion, which resulted in delays of secondary infrastructure like stairs and additional negotiation time with residents.[27]

Community participation

The community's participation in Sokoura did not involve major decisions about neighborhood design, but residents were involved in meetings and negociations regarding implementation, and smaller specific decisions about the subdivision of lots on an individual basis. Community participation was financial through the purchase of plots of land, and labor-based, through residents' involvement in the construction work. The presence of AFVP and the dialog that

they undertook with the community were important to the success of the upgrading project, especially because of the mistrust the population had of local authorities after two previous expulsions from their homes. Through the intermediary of the AFVP volunteers, a relationship was established between the Mayor's Office and the residents of Sokoura, even though this was at times problematic.

A large part of the satisfaction shown by the community was also due to the role of resident Cheick Abas Sow, who was hired by the Mayor's Office to represent the neighborhood and serve as an intermediary with the authorities. Sow was also the secretary-general of the AFUAS youth group.

The creation of a group of elders to support the youth group also indicates elders' willingness to become more involved in improving the neighborhood. The central role given to AFUAS was however contested by some groups in the neighborhood who felt that they were not included enough in discussions.[28]

According to AFVP, there were also deficiencies in representing and coordinating between different parts of the population. For example, women were not represented enough as stakeholders, especially given the fact that they were the most directly affected by factors such as access to water and sanitation. There also may not have been enough representation for the residents of Sokoura who are not Muslim (about 15-20%). Also, provisions were not made for certain types of dwellings and residents such as students and renters, whose numbers were reduced as a result of the upgrading.[29]

Influence of local politics

One of the important lessons learned from the upgrading was the pivotal role of the Mayor and the political conditions surrounding the project.[30] Relations between the local community, AFVP and the first Mayor, Karamo Konan became strained in the late 1980s when the upgrading was deemed detrimental to Konan's personal interests and political standing. These difficulties led to the election of a new mayor, Etché Elleingand, in 1990, thanks to the considerable voting power of the Sokoura residents. The initial relationship between the neighborhood and Elleingand was fruitful – the new mayor was responsive to the needs of the project and visited Sokoura often. However, these auspicious conditions only lasted as long as the Sokoura population retained its political power. After the voting rights of non-citizens in Côte d'Ivoire were taken away in 1994, this neighborhood composed of over 70% of immigrants was no longer crucial for the mayor. Sokoura receiving infrastructure that surpassed that of most neighborhoods in Aboisso in fact became a political liability because voters in the rest of the city could not benefit from them.[31] The xenophobic discourse heard throughout Côte d'Ivoire and Aboisso made it even more undesirable for politicians to devote any more resources to an immigrant neighborhood, and the relationship between AFVP and Sokoura, and the mayor once again became strained. As a result, says former AFVP volunteer Frédéric Lerond,

elements of the upgrading project like the provision of electricity were not carried out as planned.[32]

It is nevertheless interesting to note that the political tensions between the Mayor's Office and the neighborhood also helped the project in terms of cost recovery through the sale of the plots of land. Because Sokoura residents thought it would be difficult for them to obtain official property rights from local authorities without the intermediary of the AFVP, most payments were completed and many property rights were transferred by the time the last AFVP volunteer left in 1997.[33] This suggests that tenure was indeed important enough to the Sokoura residents for them to secure. The successful sale of the plots of land stands in contrast to many neighborhood upgrading projects in developing countries where it has been difficult to collect payments from the residents after the completion of construction.

Endnotes

[1] Chemonics International, 1992
[2] Ibid
[3] Chemonics International, 1992, page B-20
[4] N'Dri, 1993
[5] Ministère de la Coopération and AFVP, 1993
[6] Diomande, 2001. These figures use an exchange rate of US$1 to 500 CFA, which was the approximate rate in 1995. The 2002 rate is about US$1 to 700 CFA. It is not known how the 50% devaluation of the CFA currency in 1993 affected the costs of the project.
[7] ACT. Evaluation de Projets de Quartiers et Formulation d'Elements de Reflexion pour l'Elaboration d'une Stratégie. 1997. In World Bank, 2001
[8] Diomande, 2001
[9] Ibid
[10] Ministère de la Coopération and AFVP, 1993
[11] officiating priest at the main mosque in Sokoura
[12] Ministère de la Coopération and AFVP, 1993
[13] Ibid
[14] Ibid
[15] Diomande, 2001
[16] Ministère de la Coopération and AFVP, 1993
[17] Ibid
[18] Ibid
[19] Ibid
[20] Ibid
[21] Ibid
[22] The project ran nearly double its original budget, due to the unforeseen modifications like the necessary paving of roads to prevent erosion on the hilly terrain
[23] Ministère de la Coopération and AFVP, 1993
[24] In 1990, non-citizens could vote in Aboisso. Eligibility for voting rights was limited when, in 1994 "the Government enacted changes to the Electoral Code that included more restrictive parentage and residency requirements." "The Government [also] tripled the cost of the residence permits that noncitizens whom the Government regards as nationals of other West African countries are required to carry, while greatly reducing the cost of national identification cards for citizens. This discriminatory law tended to perpetuate the political disenfranchisement of noncitizens by making it harder for them to become citizens. It also tended to entrench the electoral power of ethnic groups, such as the Baoule, that include relatively few noncitizens." (U.S. Department of State, 1999)
[25] Ministère de la Coopération and AFVP, 1993
[26] Ibid
[27] Ibid
[28] Ibid
[29] Ibid
[30] Ibid
[31] Lerond, personnal communication 2002
[32] Lerond, personnal communication 2002. Parts of the neighborhood like the public school are still without electricity or water connections in 2002.
[33] Lerond, personnal communication 2002

Chapter V

Outcomes of the Sokoura upgrading for Aboisso

The upgrading work done in Sokoura improved the living conditions in the neighborhood. Beyond the quarter's physical changes, this chapter examines the social outcomes of the project, and considers its results in the larger context of the city's design and the Mayor's Office's urban development goals.

I. Community participation in public affairs

An unsustained participation

Residents of Sokoura generally appreciated their involvement in the upgrading work, and local engineers and planners involved in the project found that the financial and labor participation of the population had resulted in a more sustainable outcome for the neighborhood.[1] However, efforts to include communities in planning decisions have not been continued by the Mayor's Office. Even before the departure of the last AFVP volunteer in 1997, the activities of community groups in Sokoura were winding down due to a perceived lack of backing by local authorities. The youth of the AFUAS association felt that their efforts were not appreciated or supported by the Mayor's Office, and were reluctant to undertake any more activities. For example, they had started a neighborhood campaign encouraging Sokoura residents to purchase garbage bins to facilitate trash collection by the Mayor's Office and avoid further dumping of household wastes within the neighborhood. Their door-to-door education program succeeded in persuading many residents to buy the metal bins, which were not a small expense for poor households. However, as the Mayor's Office failed to collect garbage, trash rotted on the streets and corroded the bins. People blamed the youth group for wasting their money, and went back to disposing of garbage in the neighborhood ravines. According to AFUAS members, it was difficult for them to organize any further participatory improvement efforts in Sokoura because they had lost the trust of the population. They felt let down by the Mayor's Office who had not fulfill their part in helping to clean up the neighborhood.

A separate attempt was made in 1997 and 1998 to organize Aboisso residents on a city-wide scale to foster citizen participation in neighborhood improvements. The Head of the Aboisso Social Center and a Peace Corps volunteer assigned to the Mayor's Office sought to organize neighborhood committees called *CASS* (*Comités d'Action Sociale et Sanitaire*[2]). Although this

effort was not directly linked to the Sokoura project, the Head of the Social Center wanted to build on the concept of neighborhood associations like the AFUAS youth group that had played an important role in improving living conditions in Sokoura, and he was inspired by similar community efforts that had taken place in other Ivorian towns. CASS projects had been implemented successfully in secondary cities of Côte d'Ivoire like Akoupé and Biankouma, as well as neighborhoods in Abidjan like Adjamé.[3] Given limited municipal resources to monitor and improve health and environmental conditions in cities, the goal of these committees is to involve residents in improving their neighborhoods. Community leaders volunteer or are appointed in each neighborhood to form a committee that patrols the area to enforce good environmental practices. Backed by the Mayor's Office, committee members use peer pressure as well as fines to encourage residents to comply with good environmental practices, such as proper gray water disposal and latrine maintenance. Fines, membership dues and subsidies from the Mayor's Office provide the committee with funding for their activities. In the city of Biankouma the CASS had also led to a popular annual "Most Beautiful Neighborhood" contest, which provided incentive for residents to improve their living environments and bolstered their pride in their neighborhoods.

The CASS project received the approval and verbal commitment of a small amount of resources from the Aboisso Mayor's Office. Neighborhood and village chiefs were invited to organizational meetings where Deputy Mayors described the role of the CASS Committees. The leaders were asked to help identify influential residents in their neighborhoods who would help organize the committees, and environmental education sessions were carried out in neighborhoods and villages of the commune with the participation of neighborhood leaders. Several neighborhoods acted on the initiative and submitted CASS committee lists to the organizers. However, after the departure of the Peace Corps volunteer, the Head of the Social Center was not assigned another counterpart at the Mayor's Office with whom he could continue working, and the CASS committees were never put into function.[4]

These two attempts at organizing community participation in Aboisso relied to an important extent on the presence of the AFVP and Peace Corps workers as executors and intermediaries between the Mayor's Office and the community. Despite the apparent willingness of communi-

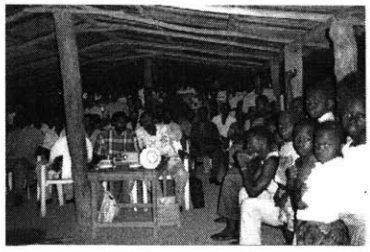


Figure 18: Presentation of CASS committee program in Assouba village

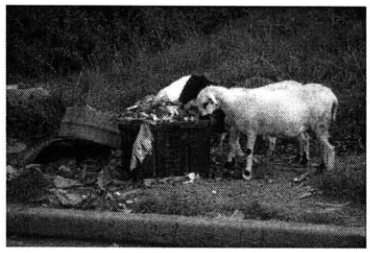


Figure 19: In 1998, old rusted garbage cans and newer plastic replacement in Sokoura

ties and local authorities to implement the participatory planning proposed by outside development agencies, their ultimate failure to sustain participation in neighborhoods puts in question the demand and long-term value of these interventions for community development in a city like Aboisso. In the case of Sokoura, the local authorities on the one hand did not maintain the relationships with the community groups without the intermediary of the AFVP volunteer, and on the other hand, community groups like AFUAS did not survive on their own without support from AFVP or local authorities. The unsustainability on both parts of the community participation envisioned by USAID and AFVP brings up the issue of who is ultimately asking for the participatory planning, and which party is best suited to implement it.

It is clear that the requirement for community participation in the project originally came from USAID, and it was implemented by AFVP at the local level. As mentioned before, Mayor Elleingand originally had political reasons for supporting Sokoura. Also, to the extent that participation involved financial contributions from the Sokoura residents in the form of payments for land, the Mayor's Office welcomed it because it represented income for the city.[5] However, they were thereafter unwilling to devote additional resources to sustain the social organization aspect of participation. The Sokoura residents agreed to participate in the project because it would allow them to preserve their current homes, and become legal residents in the city. Participation was therefore the means of achieving a clear mutual benefit for the local authorities and Sokoura residents, and was furthermore facilitated by the presence of AFVP as the impartial intermediary between the two. However, as the project came to an end and land titles were allocated, the goals and benefits of community participation became more vague: environmental protection, healthier living conditions, cultural activities. The absence of the NGO as a facilitator trusted by both sides led to a breakdown in communication between the Mayor's Office and Sokoura community groups like AFUAS. Without the participation of the Mayor's Office, the population did not believe that their involvement would make a difference, and groups created during the upgrading gradually disbanded. While there are other intervening factors to consider, the absence of a clearly identifiable program and benefit for both the Mayor's Office and Sokoura residents, and the lack of facilitation by a trusted intermediary after the end of the upgrading, seem to be a major cause of the participation's unsustainability.

Selective representation

The examination of Ivorian urban policy in Chapter 2 revealed a predominantly centralized, top-down planning culture and little involvement of ordinary citizens in political life. Indeed, citizen participation in Aboisso is mostly achieved through the intermediary of the city's social and political leaders who are seen by local authorities to be representatives of different sections of the population.

The Mayor's Office tends to rely on a select number of community leaders to disseminate

information or resolve problems. For example, one of the few Mayor's Office interventions in Sokoura is impounding goats that roam freely in Sokoura and are seen as a nuisance to the environment and public health. The goats are kept in the Technical Services part of the Mayor's Office until the owners claim them and pay a fine.[6] Such an intervention in January 2002 caused an altercation between the municipality's workers and Sokoura residents who resisted the confiscation, and several residents were arrested by the local police. In order to resolve the situation, the Mayor summoned the neighborhood chief and imam as representatives of Sokoura for a meeting at City Hall, rather than hold a public meeting or negotiate directly with the concerned individuals.

A survey of four small communes near Adzopé and Korhogo in the early 1990s by Crook similarly found a low rate of public participation and awareness of local affairs, and the same reliance by elected officials on a informal meetings with selected constituents:

> When questioned on [the lack of formal meetings and accountability to their constituents] most councillors [...] claimed that 'everybody knew them' and that they engaged in 'informal' soundings of popular opinion. According to the councillors, if they needed to consult the population on a particular matter, they spoke to the village or quarter (neighborhood) chief and if necessary organized a meeting. Both commune documents and survey data indicate, however, that most 'consultations' went no further than the elders and notables, except for major exercises involving formal public meetings.[7]

Key contact people are seemingly relied upon by elected officials for their social, cultural or economic status, but they are usually not the democratically elected representatives of the people that they represent. For example, people like Mariam Touré, a dynamic and influent woman at the marketplace and in the T.P. neighborhood, is considered a community leader by the Mayor's Office, and she is often called on to disseminate information to people in the neighborhood. Community leaders may also be the heads of independent associations in town, for example, the president of the Aboisso Youth Union UJCA (*Union des Jeunes de la Commune d'Aboisso*), who is elected every two years by the organization's members,[8] or the president of the women's association of Aboisso (UFRA, *Union des Femmes Ressortissantes d'Aboisso*). This reliance on informal representatives is effective to the extent that the leaders can actually represent their communities. However, it is limiting in that there is no forum in which the voices of any ordinary resident of Aboisso can be heard directly by the local authorities. Furthermore, considering that ethnic and religious leaders were empowered by former president Houphouët-Boigny to control public dissent,[9] the municipality's continued reliance on them signals that direct public participation in city affairs is still very limited.

While municipal meetings should be a vehicle for increased public participation in urban

affairs, their impact is small. The Municipal Council meetings are open to the public and the Mayor says he welcomes attendance by the general public, but the activities of the Council are not publicized, meetings are sporadic,[10] and they are attended by very few people who are not from the Mayor's Office or on the Council. Meetings therefore generate little knowledge of and discussion about public affairs among the general public.

The lack of sustainability and replicability of the Sokoura community participation in Aboisso can to some extent be explained by the centralized planning style of the Ivorian government which has until recently allowed for little public participation in decision making. Since this concept of urban planning is ingrained in both the local government and communities, it is unlikely that the upgrading project would have significantly changed it in Aboisso during the 6 years of its implementation. Ultimately, the participation by Sokoura residents was also limited by their lower social status and the decrease in their political power with the loss of voting rights. Despite this lack of sustainability, the participatory planning still resulted in a neighborhood whose physical form was more responsive than the official planning procedures to the population's need for smaller, more affordable lots with lower building standards.

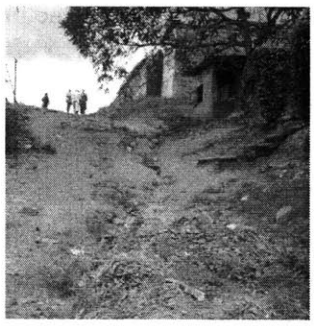
II. Urban design and plans for future growth

Sokoura in the context of Aboisso

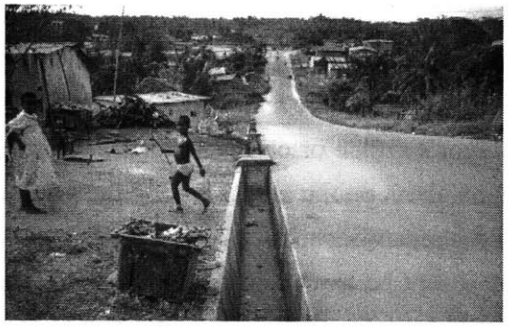
While Sokoura has the lowest standard of housing in the city, its road infrastructure is better than most other neighborhoods, and it is the only part of town that has any sidewalks. Only Commerce, Bellevue and SOS, which are the downtown and high-end residential areas, have comparable roads. The extensive *Rive Gauche* area only has dirt roads, and Aboisso residents often comment that its "beautiful houses" are "*dans la poussière*," or covered in the thick red dust kicked up by cars from the roads during the dry season. Most neighborhoods on the *Rive Droite* (right bank) are served by paved main access roads, and secondary dirt streets that are often eroded, sometimes to the point of being impracticable (Figure 20).

The paving of roads is considered a priority by Aboisso residents for their neighborhoods: in the dry season it would decrease the important amounts of pathogen-bearing dust from the roads, and during the rainy season it would reduce soil erosion and mud, facilitating pedestrian and vehicle circulation. Some residents from other parts of town complain about the fact that a former squatter neighborhood with substandard housing like Sokoura has paved roads while they do not. According to the Head of the Social Center, the complainants who blame the Mayor's Office for the disparity do not understand that the road paving was not originally planned as part of the upgrading project, but rather emerged as a necessity because of the area's steep landscape.[11]

The fact that Sokoura's population is mostly composed of immigrants and their families is



Eboikro



Sokoura

also a source of discontent among some city residents.[12] To them, given the shortage of land plots and housing in the commune, it is unfair to give subsidized land with considerably better infrastructure to poor "foreigners." The idea that Sokoura residents were not deserving of the upgrading project is illustrated by an intervention by an elected councilor during a Municipal Council meeting in 1997. It is interesting to note that an examination of official Municipal Council meeting notes from 1990 to 2002 reveals very little discussion about Sokoura.[13] There were only two notable mentions of the neighborhood in the twelve years spanning the second half and immediate follow-up to the project. In 1991, the Mayor speaks of the infrastructure development in Sokoura and asks municipal councilors to contribute to the fund for families displaced by the construction. Then in 1997, a councilor pointed to the fact that 5 years after the end of infrastructure construction, Sokoura inhabitants have failed to start improving their dwellings as planned. As a solution, he proposed imposing a deadline for housing improvements, or hiring a real estate company to redevelop the neighborhood. A Deputy Mayor however pointed out that the latter solution would be too expensive for the residents of Sokoura.[14] It appears that in the end neither of these options was ever pursued. Nevertheless, it is an illustration of the idea that land should be owned by people who have the means of developing it to a certain standard.

The upgrading of Sokoura has therefore generated jealousy on the part of some constituents, but since Elleingand has been re-elected twice since the beginning of the project, it seems not to be too big a political liability. The Mayor has said that were the project to be redone, he would emphasize infrastructure upgrading for the whole city instead of concentrating all the resources in a squatter neighborhood.[15] He has promised the imminent paving of Rive Gauche to his constituents, but the municipal investment budget is far from being able to pay for such a project, and no outside funding has been allocated. The only work carried out in Rive Gauche is the occasional leveling of the roads by the Technical Services.

According to Francis Vanga from the Mayor's Office, residents from other neighborhoods have been willing to invest in Sokoura because it is better equipped with roads and utilities than the new subdivisions available in Aboisso. The demand for plots in Sokoura increased after the upgrading and new housing has been constructed.[16] Some Sokoura residents recently left Côte

Figure 20 (left and right pages): The excellent road conditions in Sokoura contrasts with erosion of dirt roads in other neighborhoods like Eboikro and TP

TP quarter

d'Ivoire because of an escalation of political violence against foreigners between 2000 and 2001, and it is not clear who is moving into the multi-storied buildings that are emerging in the neighborhood. According to Vanga, it is difficult to track the resale of Sokoura properties because so much of it is done informally. The turnover however seems to be a relatively small proportion of the population, which remains mostly immigrant or second or third generation Ivorian.[17]

If Sokoura has better infrastructure than the rest of the city, it does not receive better maintenance services from the public authorities than the rest of town. Services provided by the Mayor's Office are trash collection and occasional interventions by Technical Services employees to resolve disputes between neighbors about issues like proper trash and greywater disposal. A 1995 DCGTx survey of trash collection in Aboisso found that the Sokoura, Koliayewa, and Rive Gauche neighborhoods had two weekly trash pickups, compared to one pickup in some other neighborhoods.[18] However, because of the frequent problems with the garbage trucks (breakdowns, shortage of fuel etc.) this figure is not likely to be accurate, and many households in Sokoura still dispose of their waste in nearby ravines so that it will not sit on the street in front of their houses. The main municipal trash dump is also located on the outer limits of Sokoura to the North, and the garbage truck drives through the neighborhood to reach it.
The downtown Commerce and Administrative quarters and the marketplace are the most regularly maintained, with daily trash removal, the periodic cleaning of drainage canals, and street sweeping. While the infrastructure in Sokoura has stood up well, the lack of maintenance is gradually taking its toll: clogged canals, soil erosion that creates dirt buildups onto the pavement, and disrepair of sidewalks (Figure 21).

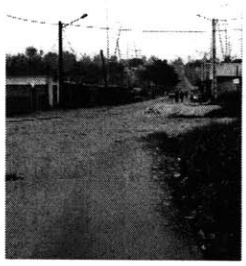


Figure 21: Lack of road maintenance and garbage collection in Sokoura have led to trash dumping in the neighborhood and clogging of canals and roads due to erosion

Subdivisions, housing typologies and zoning

Sokoura differs from other parts of town by its irregular layout and lot subdivisions. Subdivisions in other neighborhoods follow uniform orthogonal plot layouts and sizes, and the Commerce and Administrative quarters are laid out in a grid pattern (Figure 22). Plots in Sokoura are also smaller than those in the rest of the city, with a minimum of 200 m^2 and an average of 350 m^2 compared to a minimum of 400 m^2 and an average of 500 m^2 in other parts of Aboisso. Since they were subsidized by USAID Sokoura plots are also cheaper, ranging from 50,000 to 90,000 CFA ($100 to $180).

Neighborhood	Price of a land plot	Minimum plot size	Average plot size
Sokoura	35,000-50,000 CFA	200m^2	350 m^2
Rive-Gauche	80,000 CFA	400 m^2	400-600 m^2
T.P., Eboikro	80,000 CFA	400 m^2	400-600 m^2
Bellevue	150,000 CFA	400 m^2	600-800 m^2
SOS	300,000 CFA	400 m^2	600-800 m^2

Table 3: Prices and sizes of plots of land in selected Aboisso neighborhoods[22]
Source: Commune of Aboisso and Ministry of Construction and Urbanism, Aboisso Office, 2002

Famien Allou, the Third Deputy Mayor of Aboisso, differentiates Sokoura from the rest of Aboisso as a neighborhood that was "created by people rather than planned." According to him, the neighborhood is crowded because it was shaped by people in their urgent need for housing, rather than planned by professionals.[23]

There is an effort on the part of the Mayor's Office and the Land Allocation Commission to implement zoning in Aboisso by activity (commercial, administrative and residential), and by residential type (rental units, owner occupied, different standards of living)(Figure 22).[24] While a survey of the town shows that this zoning has successfully maintained a downtown in the Commerce and Administrative quarters, as well as created high end neighborhoods in Bellevue and SOS, the finer grain zoning intentions have not been strictly enforced. According to Ayémou Ayémou at the Ministry of Construction and Urbanism and the Third Deputy Mayor Allou, authorities have had to take into account the lack of housing and poverty of the local population: "In the beginning we are rigorous [in enforcing rules], but afterwards we have to let people build." This suggests that housing standards have restricted land ownership to households with political connections and those who could prove that they had the means to build according to the required standards (Chapter 3). However, once the land is allocated, there is currently little enforcement of the construction standards. The main obstacle to obtaining land and building housing is therefore the Land Commission's allocation requirements, and the Sokoura project gave land access to a poor population by bypassing official procedures.

The neighborhoods in Aboisso can be distinguished by their different housing typologies, which indicate the social-economic statuses of their inhabitants. They are generally as follows:

Neighborhoods	Housing typologies
Sokoura; Koliayewa	small single family dwellings and courtyards, mud or concrete few new multi-storied studio apartment buildings
Rive-Gauche	single and multi-family courtyard housing
T.P., Eboikro	multi-storied apartment buildings single-family houses and courtyards multi-family courtyards
Bellevue	Large villas surrounded enclosed by high walls
SOS	Large to very large European style villas and compounds enclosed by high walls

Table 4: Housing typologies in selected Aboisso neighborhoods

There are also a large number of low density informal settlements called "*campements*" on the outskirts of the city, beyond the official lot subdivisions. Mostly made out of mud, these dwellings house a considerable number of people who are displaced when new subdivisions are created.[25]

Areas of growth

The site area covered by Sokoura represents a significant proportion of Aboisso, and its new infrastructure formalized a significant growth area to the north of the city. Since the end of the Sokoura project in 1997, sporadic housing construction, both out of mud and concrete bricks, has continued in areas beyond the officially planned lots. The new lot subdivisions planned by the Mayor's Office are in the T.P. neighborhood to the South and to the East in Rive-Gauche near the Panan-Panan neighborhood, because these areas are less hilly and because the land titles are easier for the authorities to acquire than in the Sokoura and SOS areas of town (Figure 22).[19]

According to First Deputy Mayor Seydou Gueye, the Mayor's Office plans to extend the city much farther beyond its current limits. His envisioned growth is one of lateral expansion as opposed to densification of the existing city. Despite the issue of access to transportation as the town spreads farther and farther out, Gueye predicts that many people who build in Aboisso will want to live in spacious one-story houses, especially since for many it will be their retirement homes.[20] Third Deputy Mayor Allou further remarks that people in Côte d'Ivoire prefer to build homes in their native villages, and the authorities are therefore encouraging them to invest in Aboisso instead.[21] These two views suggest a focus by elected officials on middle to high income housing in their plans for future development in Aboisso.

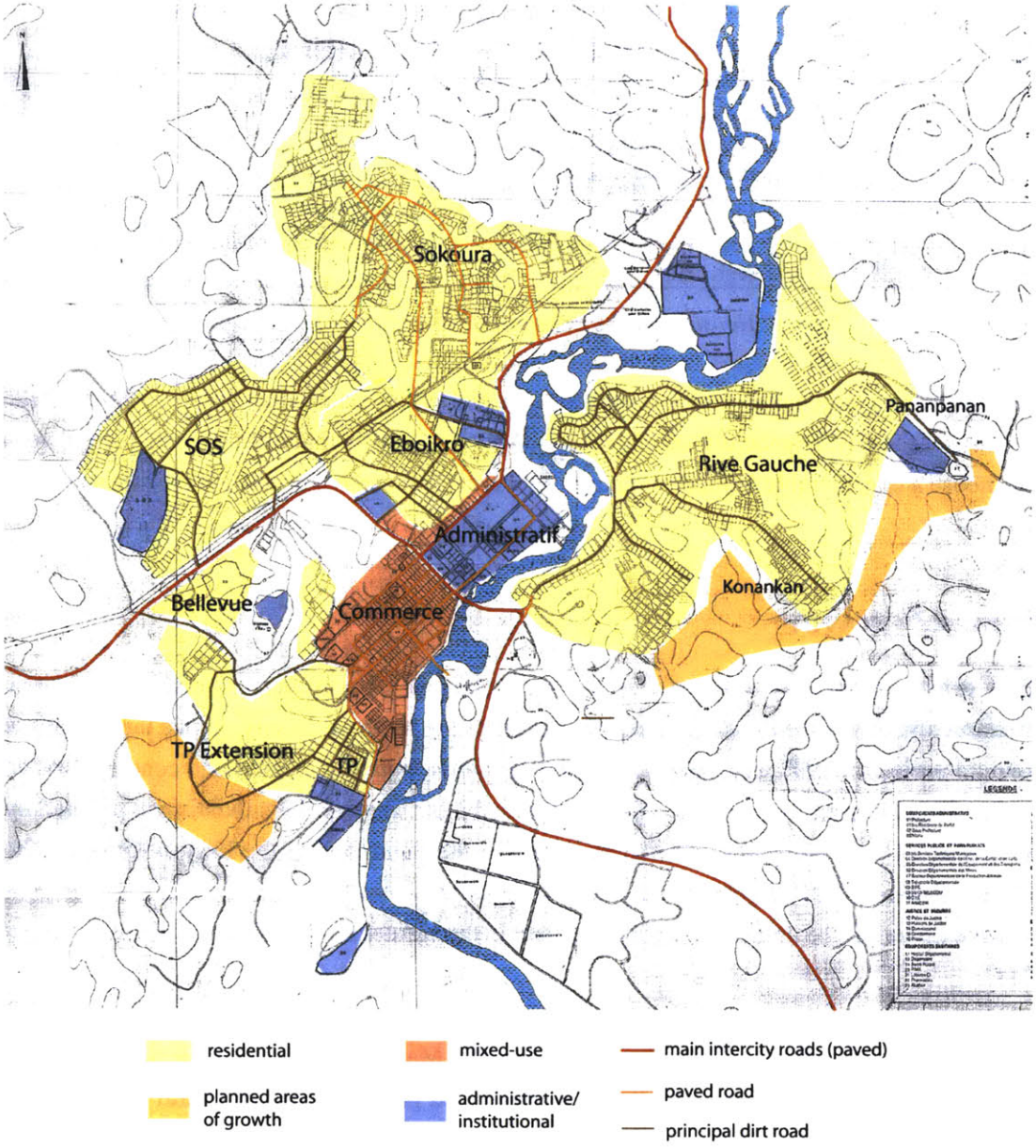


Figure 22: Zoning and road infrastructure in Aboisso
Source: DCGTx, 1995 modified by author

III. Future development and image of the city

Urban design priorities

In *Planning: Rethinking Ciudad Guayana*, Lisa Peattie cites the urban designer's goals for the new city:

> [The design] must create order, a sense of unity, and a memorable image. It must emanate a sense of beauty that will foster pride and loyalty to the city.[26]

To Peattie,

> [the designers] did not think just of designing a city with suitable locations and infrastructure for industry; they envisaged a beautiful city with agreeable neighborhoods and public spaces. In part this was because they saw urbanity and amenity as critically important means for attracting the technical elites and the outside investors who were thought to be crucial to the development process. [...] [T]heir preoccupation with the city center, characterized as "the heart of the city," was both promotional or elite-attracting and an aspect of their commitment to community.[27]

Although Peattie was describing Venezuela in the 1960s, these sentiments also capture the discourse of the Aboisso Mayor's Office, who is the main decision maker about the development of the city. A similar image of the city is evidenced by statements from the administration and recent developments in Aboisso.

Aboisso does not currently have a master plan. A first plan was prepared under former Mayor Konan in 1982 by a team of architecture students from the University of Paris.[28] It was however elaborated in a period of economic boom, and its ambitions for the city reflected expectations that Aboisso would be hosting the national Independence Day celebrations.[29] Planned infrastructure included a 2.5 km long, 50m wide north-south *voie de défilé* (procession way) cross-

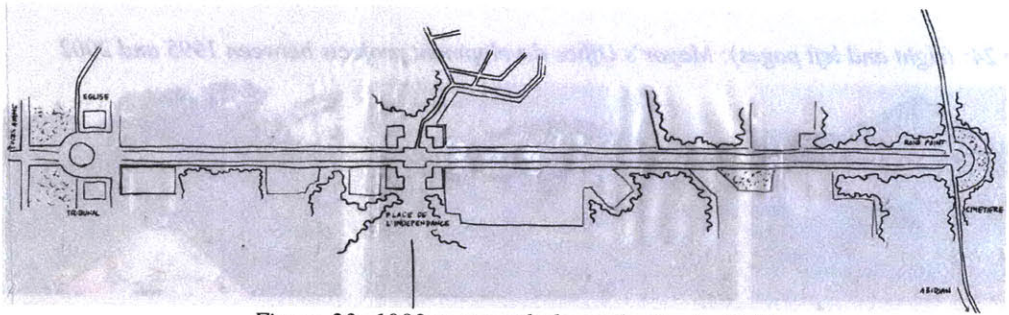


Figure 23: 1982 proposed planned voie de défilé
Source: Ecole d'Architecture de Paris La Villette UP6, 1984

ing a *Place de l'Indépendence* (Independence Square) in the current Administrative quarter,[30] an anthropology research center and museum near the square, a new central market and bus station, riverside pedestrian park, infrastructure for surrounding villages, and utility connections for new neighborhoods. The masterplan was never implemented because of the cancellation of Aboisso's Independence celebration and an economic recession that sharply reduced Government funding since the 1980s. However, some modified elements of the plan have been carried out over the past 10 years with funding from international donors, like the riverside park and pedestrian footbridge linking Rive Gauche to the Lycée quarter.

While most Mayor's Office and national authorities in Aboisso seem aware of the issues facing local residents, decisions about future development are set by the priorities of the professional and administrative class. A 1999 regional conference on the revival of the Aboisso Department, organized by the prefect, included mostly professionals, business and administrative leaders of the region.[31] They considered many issues, among which were the needs of the region in terms of social affairs, housing, and the environment. In terms of housing, an assigned commission identified priorities as being the conservation of the natural environment, the establishment of a master plan to guide future development, the promotion of new building technologies such as earth bricks, and the need for the national government to provide office buildings for ministries wishing to open offices in Aboisso. The commission recommended that local authorities undertake measures to require better maintenance of buildings by property owners, in order to spruce up the image of the town. In terms of the environment, the commission highlighted issues of pollution and erosion. They suggested the creation of hygiene committees in neighborhoods, protection of water resources, construction of drainage canals and public latrines by the authorities, the creation of better garbage dumps, and more public parks and gardens. The fact that there was no mention of issues important to Aboisso residents like the lack of housing, ensuing high cost of living, health problems and lack of infrastructure, suggests a gap between these decision makers and the general population. The promotion of tourism in the region was encouraged through the creation of artisanal activities in villages and development of the natural beauty of the region.[32] There was little mention of how these initiatives would be achieved, other than a heavy reliance on the local government to provide them.

Figure 24: (right and left pages): Mayor's Office development projects between 1995 and 2002

City gate at the riverside

City Hall

Riverside arch

While the Municipal Council is the local legislative body, it seems to have little influence over decisions about the future development of the city. An examination of notes from Municipal Council meetings over the past 12 years shows that most of the meeting time involves the clarification and approval of annual and tri-annual budgets for the Municipality.[33] Specific issues of urban development are brought up sporadically up by one or more councilors. In some cases, a councilor asks that water and electricity services be provided to his neighborhood. In other cases, councilors ask for clarifications on projects being carried out in town. While some objections are raised to the way in which development is taken place, almost all of the Mayor's initiatives are approved by an overwhelming majority in the Council. This observation conforms with Crook and Hillebrand's analyses that the Mayor is the strongest and relatively unopposed decision maker in Ivorian municipalities.[34]

The interventions of some councilors do however give some indication of residents' objections to the Mayor's Office's focus on symbolic projects. In 1994, a councilor mentioned citizen complaints about the merits of building a large city gate monument at the riverside park. The Third Deputy Mayor justified the project by explaining that the monument will improve the image of the city, thereby attracting tourists and investors. He explained that it was part of the city's efforts to embellish the local environment and develop the park, which will be enhanced by future boutiques and restaurants.[35] In 1999, a municipal councilor inquired about plans to put a illuminated multicolored fountain next to the riverside park. Notes from the council meeting recorded this response from the Mayor:

> A water fountain will be installed in the waters of the Bia [river] between the bridge and the waterfalls across from the developed riverbanks. It is an uncommon project, exceptional, that is a gift for the population of Aboisso at the beginning of the 3rd millennium. The objective is to make Aboisso into a pretty town where people would like to live. That is why [...] the environmental improvement projects and creation of green spaces will continue to increase the population's quality if life.[36]

The fountain has to this date not been installed due to technical difficulties and a lack of funding. However, the concept of making Aboisso more attractive through aesthetic enhancements

Riverside park

Unfinished cultural center

New housing compound for Aboisso Prefect in SOS

to the downtown remains prevalent in the plans of the Mayor's Office. Environmental improvements, like the transformation of the previously polluted riverbanks into a promenade and park, are appreciated by the population and considered an enhancement of the local quality of life.[37] During the day, it serves as a pleasant resting and meeting place mostly for ambulant vendors, and on holidays families gather there for picture taking. The park is also a regular stopping place for bus tours from a nearby Club Med. The public latrines are fee-based and maintained by employees of the Mayor's Office, and a high-end restaurant co-owned by a Deputy-Mayor recently opened at the riverside. However, further embellishment of the downtown is not identified as a priority by many inhabitants of Aboisso. Some citizens like Sokoura school director Touré Abou Garba consider such undertakings to be "luxury projects" aimed at projecting a good image rather than addressing more pressing problems. Garba would prefer to allocate greater funding to more practical projects like schools.[38] Youth groups in Aboisso request more funding for more social and educational activities, and most households interviewed for this thesis identified sanitary and environmental improvements in their neighborhood to be the most urgent priority.

As in many cities of the world, the Aboisso Mayor's Office wants to convey the image of a dynamic and attractive city in order to attract outside investment and tourists.[39] A recent promotional brochure emphasizes the historical and cultural significance of the town, and features prominent new infrastructure like the new city hall, improved shopping facilities, a new bus station, and social amenities like schools and health care centers, as well as parks and recreational spaces. These images, as evoked by the Mayor in his public addresses, communicate the image of a city with a rich history and culture, which is undergoing a revival that will enable it to become an important economic and cultural center.

While Sokoura has the most modern road infrastructure of the city, it is not advertised as an asset to the city. This is because the poor standard of the housing does not make it a showcase neighborhood, and because it is located far away from the downtown area and therefore unlikely to be seen by visitors. In this sense, the Sokoura upgrading does not fit into the development priorities of the Mayor's Office, which focus mainly on improving administrative and public amenities in the downtown. It can be argued that the Mayor's Office is concentrating the little resources it has to create central amenities that are accessible to everyone, such as public

Figure 25: Riverside park funded by the European Development Fund

open space. While it is true that parks and improved market amenities benefit the general public, the character of some of the improvements like the upscale restaurant at the riverside park indicates that they are geared towards tourists and the wealthy sections of the population. The majority of Aboisso's inhabitants, especially women and children, spend most of their time in residential neighborhoods where little attention has been given to public amenities. Furthermore, an examination of the Mayor's Office's recent funding priorities shows a concentration on equipping and embellishing new public buildings with which the general public has little interaction (Table 5 and Appendix 3).

Projects	Funding	Percentage
Neighborhood and village improvements, including new lot parcellations and markets	21,822,000	15%
Improvements to City Hall (computers, office furniture and landscaping) and furniture for Secretary General's home	54,085,000	37.3%
Completion of new bus station and cultural center construction	35,550,000	24.5%
Redevelopment of downtown open space	15,565,000	10.7%
Purchase of garbage trucks	18,000,000	12.4%
Total	145,022,000	99.9%*

*does not add to 100% due to rounding errors

Table 5: Allocations of the tri-annual investment budget for 2002-2004 in CFA[40]
Source: Commune of Aboisso

Recent development funding

Since the completion of the Sokoura project, Aboisso's main source of development aid has been the European Development Fund (*FED,* or *Fonds Européen de Développement*) under their Coastal Communes Development Program (*PDCC*, or *Programme de Développement des Communes Côtières*). The African Development Bank has also funded the construction and rehabilitation of primary schools in several neighborhoods.

The goal of the PDCC program is to promote the social and economic development of communes in the coastal areas of Côte d'Ivoire by developing infrastructure, increasing revenue generation and management by local governments, and encouraging the growth of the private sector.[41] Most projects funded by FED were proposed by the municipality under Mayor Elleingand. In some cases, like the riverside park, the FED funding was used to finish a project that the Mayor's Office had already started, but for which they had run out of funding. These projects have concentrated on developing public amenities and infrastructure almost exclusively in the downtown area. Among them are a cultural center, a new city hall, an events hall, and a footbridge linking Rive Gauche to the area near the main high school. As mentioned earlier, the ideas for these projects are not new as many were slated in the 1982 master plan that was never realized.

The FED projects, which were funded from about 1994 to 1999, contrast with the Sokoura upgrading in that the funding agency dealt exclusively with the Mayor's Office, and the projects did not include any community participation. They are public amenities that upgrade the image of the central city and improve the authorities' ability to raise revenue for the municipality, rather than projects that directly serve residents in their neighborhoods. For example, the construction of the new enclosed bus station will give municipal agents better control over the flow of vehicles operating in the city, therefore leading to more efficient tax collection.[42]

In some cases, the FED funding ran out before the end of the projects, and the Mayor's Office has had to resort to other resources to complete them. Construction of the cultural center has been stalled by a lack of funding, the extension to the marketplace has yet to be completed, and the bus station is gradually being finished with the participation of local merchants and private bus operators. The different nature of the FED funded projects reflect an approach to development that emphasizes improving the capacity of the municipality to provide commercial, cultural and social services to their citizens. They are also programs with shorter implementation periods that perhaps perhaps did not allow for organizing public participation.

Endnotes

[1] Coopération Francaise and AFVP, 1993; Vanga, 2002

[2] Social and Sanitation Action Committees

[3] Serageldin, 1990; Center for Urban Development Studies, 2002. Adjamé also organized similar groups called Neighborhood Committees (*Comités de Quartier*, or *CDQ)* who promoted social, cultural and economic activities in the commune.

[4] Gnago, interview 2002

[5] Although all the land payments were supposed to be reinvested in the neighborhood, part of the income from land sales ultimately went to the Mayor's Office's budget.

[6] In January 2002, the fine was very high at the local scale, at 7,000 CFA or about $11

[7] Crook, 1996

[8] UJCA is the umbrella organization for all the neighborhood youth groups in Aboisso. Youth group membership includes for the most part young men between the ages of 20 and 35.

[9] Cohen, 1974

[10] They are called by the Mayor 3 to 5 times a year.

[11] Gnago, interview 2002

[12] The issue of who is considered Ivorian is a great source of contention in Côte d'Ivoire. Immigrants who have lived in the country for over 20 years and their children have sometimes not taken on Ivorian citizenship, and even those who have are often not considered "true Ivorians" by the rest of the population.

[13] This period represents Mayor Elleingand's term in office. Notes from Council meetings under the previous mayor were not available under the current administration.

[14] Report from Aboisso Municipal Council meeting of November 21, 1997

[15] World Bank, 2001

[16] Ibid

[17] Sow, interview 2002

[18] DCGTx, 1995

[19] Vanga, interview 2002

[20] Gueye, interview 2002
[21] Allou, interview 2002
[22] Ayémou, interview 2002; Eckponon, interview 2002; Gohou, interview 2002; Ministère de la Coopération and AFVP, 1993; The World Bank, 2001. The price of the plots depend on their access to infrastructure like roads, water and electricity.
[23] Allou, interview 2002
[24] Ayémou, interview 2002
[25] In 1998 inhabitants of the informal settlements in near the T.P. quarter organized a committee to protest the destruction of their homes and eviction. The outcome of their meeting with the Mayor's office was not documented. Report from Aboisso Municipal Council meeting of November 28, 1998
[26] Wilhelm Von Moltke, "Urban Design Intent: Three Case Studies"(Manuscript, January 1983), in Peattie, 1987, page 51
[27] Peattie, 1987, page 51
[28] Ecole d'Architecture de Paris La Villette UP6, 1984
[29] DCGTx, 1995
[30] The *Place de l'Indépendence* would house the major public buildings of the city like the City Hall, prefecture and sub-prefecture.
[31] République de Côte d'Ivoire, 1999
[32] Ibid
[33] This is the period covering Elleingand's tenure as Mayor. Notes from meetings under former Mayor Konan were not available under the current administration
[34] Crook, 1996; Hillebrand, 1996
[35] Report from Aboisso Municipal Council meeting of December 28, 1994
[36] Report from Aboisso Municipal Council meeting of July 3, 1999
[37] Gnago, interview 2002; Touré, interview 2002; Ayémou, interview 2002. According to Third Deputy Mayor, the riverside park and promenade are a revival of a similar walkway that existed in the same location during Côte d'Ivoire's colonial period. The Mayor's Office also has plans to renovate the now defunct "Bambou Island" restaurant ("*Ile Bambou*") located in the river near the park, which was in operation in the 1980s.
[38] Garba, interview 2002
[39] Vale and Bass Warner, 2001
[40] Minutes of the Aboisso Municipal Council meeting of December 14, 2001.
[41] DCGTx, 1995
[42] Road tax collectors currently stand at the police road blocks at either entrance to the city, and can only collect taxes from buses and cars that are stopped for police inspections.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

The Sokoura upgrading achieved the general project goals set by USAID by improving road access to the neighborhood and living conditions in the former squatter settlement without displacing the current residents. It also allowed Sokoura inhabitants to gain access to land ownership, which secured their tenure rights, alleviated their fears of being displaced by future development, and encouraged the improvement of dwellings. Neighborhood leaders and AFVP report that the community viewed the project and its results favorably as a result of having been included in the upgrading process.

Beyond these upgrading accomplishments, however, the project modified Sokoura's status in the city of Aboisso spatially, socially and to some extent politically. Consideration of the socio-political and cultural factors that have influenced planning in Aboisso leads to a more complex assessment of the project in the context of the whole city. By building significant roads in the former squatter settlement, the upgrading created inequalities in infrastructure between Sokoura and other neighborhoods whose residents want road paving to improve accessibility and environmental conditions around their own homes. The ease of implementing the project varied with the changing political influence of Sokoura residents. In 1995, four years into the upgrading process, Sokoura was a strong voting block, and former Mayor Konan was voted out of office because he had impeded the progress of the project. Newly-elected Mayor Elleingand was immediately responsive to the needs of the neighborhood, but after Sokoura lost its voting power in 1994 due to legal changes in citizenship requirements, his attentions to Sokoura's problems waned rather drastically. Elleingand was faced with the political liability of granting subsidized access to land for a large number of immigrants while voting residents in the rest of Aboisso complained of the acute shortage of available land and housing.

The Sokoura upgrading was a combination of centralized planning decisions and local participation, and as such it demonstrates the advantages and limitations of both approaches. At the local level, the population's participation in the implementation of the project improved the residents' understanding and adherence to the upgrading, but Sokoura's vulnerability to local politics signals the limitations of planning at the municipal level. In contrast to the Mayor's Office that is directly accountable to its voters, the central government or outside funding agency can override local politics and implement a politically sensitive project. USAID and DCGTx were able to address the needs of 7,000 people, nearly a quarter of the residents

of Aboisso, who did not have the political and economic clout to demand services from the Mayor's Office. On the other hand, the resulting disparity between the resources allocated to Sokoura and the under-investment in other moderate to low-income neighborhoods has been a source of contention in Aboisso. It can therefore also be argued that the project's centralized planning and focus on improving a squatter settlement did not sufficiently consider social and political factors and the project's impact in the wider context of the city.

Community participation in urban development was a new element introduced in Aboisso by the Sokoura project through the intermediary of AFVP community workers. It however did not prove to be sustainable in the long run, most likely due to the decrease in Sokoura's political importance to the Mayor and a lack of local experience and resources to continue the effort. Infrastructure projects by the Mayor's Office since Sokoura have been non-participatory and located in the downtown rather than residential areas. Nevertheless, the community participation implemented in Sokoura was a valuable intervention in giving a voice and a stake in urban development to a disenfranchised population. Although the participation of residents in the project was mostly in terms of consultation and implementation of the upgrading rather than the actual master planning, the community did shape the physical design of the neighborhood to the extent that the planners and engineers tried to preserve the existing layout of dwellings the squatters had created. This ultimately resulted in smaller, more affordable (although also subsidized) plots of land for the population, with more adaptability to the natural landscape. In light of Sokoura's reduction in political influence with the loss of voting rights, Sokoura residents' status as landowners provided them with housing security and greater legitimacy in the eyes of the authorities.

Limitations of the thesis

One limitation of this thesis is the lack of information about the evolution of Sokoura before the project started, and its status in the early stages of the upgrading. In particular, no municipal records from former Mayor Konan's term in office are available under the current administration. Descriptions of the Sokoura upgrading are primarily from final evaluation reports by AFVP, USAID and the World Bank rather than primary project literature. However, more specific information about local attitudes and objectives at the inception of the project would be useful in understanding the early political context of the upgrading, and would allow a more meaningful before-and-after comparison.

Due to limited time and resources, information was collected from institutional and government sources and publications, and interviews were mostly with municipal and ministry representatives. More interviews with Sokoura and Aboisso residents would have given better insight into the general public's opinions and stories about the upgrading and its results, rather than having to rely on government and AFVP accounts.

Also, no data was available about any changes in land ownership, dwelling structures or incomes of Sokoura households in the five years since the official end of the project. This would have allowed a better evaluation of the current investments and demographic changes in the neighborhood.

Areas of further study

The upgrading of Sokoura preserved its identity as a poor, mostly immigrant and Muslim neighborhood. Although older and wealthier neighborhoods like Commerce, Eboikro and SOS are home to mostly Agni households, newer areas like Rive Gauche and T.P. are ethnically and religiously diverse. Given that the ruling class in Aboisso are predominantly Christian and Agni, and given ongoing problems of ethnic tensions and xenophobia throughout Côte d'Ivoire, what are the consequences of formalizing a mostly immigrant and Muslim neighborhood in Aboisso? It gives the immigrant and Muslim community more visibility and clout, and preserves the existing social organization of the squatters, but it could also create a focus for resentment from non-Muslim residents. It would be interesting to see whether this aspect of ethnic integration has been a consideration for other upgrading projects, and whether the Sokoura project should have tried to create a more diverse and integrated neighborhood.

Another issue for further investigation is the impact of the community's participation on Sokoura residents' attitudes towards the local authorities. Although the community involvement as envisioned by USAID and AFVP only lasted for the length of the project and did not lead to significant increases in participation efforts with the Mayor's Office, did it change people's perception of local government and their role as citizens? What informal education about citizen organization and participation took place in Sokoura? Is it manifesting itself through its residents?

Finally, the issue of appropriate standards is one that should be further investigated in the context of the Sokoura upgrading. While the project provided for the relaxing of standards for plot sizes and housing structures that was beneficial to Sokoura's residents, it implemented a high-standard road system that was ultimately a source of contention. In retrospect, a larger number of residents in Aboisso would have been served more equitably had the road system been of lower standard and of wider reach. For example, the road paving could have been allocated to several main roads in Sokoura, Rive Gauche and the TP quarters instead of concentrating all the resources in Sokoura. The question of what standards are appropriate as well as who has the authority to change existing rules is central to the discussion about how to integrate an upgraded neighborhood and its inhabitants with the rest of the city.

Five years after the official end of the AFVP and USAID intervention in Sokoura, the physical environment is slowly improving as residents and newcomers to the neighborhood upgrade housing to match the new infrastructure. While recent political and economic crises, and anti-immigrant sentiments in Côte d'Ivoire have been recent setbacks to the development of the neighborhood, it is now recognized as an integral part of the city. The project raised questions in Aboisso about increased community participation in urban development, the planning priorities of local politicians, and how to equitably provide housing and services to the poor throughout the city. Further evaluations over time will tell if the community's participation in the project made a long-term difference in the composition and character of the physical environment and of its residents.

Appendix 1

Commune of Aboisso municipal revenues in CFA, 1991-2001

Separated by tax revenue and government allocation to the commune

year	local tax revenue	state allocation
1991	133,803,300	38,852,000
1992	160,690,500	38,852,000
1993*	133,159,000	38,852,000
1994	181,954,900	43,768,300
1995	405,785,500	52,768,300
1996	354,666,900	44,335,500
1997	460,677,100	44,335,700
1998	365,147,200	44,335,700
1999	423,157,500	38,228,300
2000	305,720,300	44,336,000
2001	200,141,800	38,288,000

Source: Commune of Aboisso

* *The CFA currency was devalued by half in 1993, representing a loss of buying power*

Increases between 1995 and 2000 represent European Development Fund contributions to the budget

Commune of Aboisso expenses in CFA, 1996 and 2000

year	budget type	total	operational	investment
1996	planned	465,148,000	153,781,000	311,368,000*
	actual	221,687,794	121,977,016	99,710,778
2000	planned	282,038,000	206,038,000	76,000,000
	actual	214,204,072	182,246,759	31,957,313

Source: Commune of Aboisso

**out of which 212,968,000CFA came from the European Development Fund, and 98,400,000 CFA were from the Commune.*

Budgets in 1999 and 2000 fell sharply because of political turmoil, and also the end of the European Development Fund program.

Appendix 2

Sokoura upgrading project costs

Final cost estimates as of 1997 were as follows (in CFA and US$*)

USAID contribution	in CFA	in US$
Infrastructure	335,000,000	670,000
Leveling and dirt roads	7,000,000	14,000
Provide wells for displaced families	1,000,000	2,000
First phase of management by AFVP	20,000,000	40,000
Total	363,000,000	726,000

Commune of Aboisso contribution		
AFVP office building in Sokoura	1,000,000	2,000
Ivorian community developer	1,000,000	2,000
AFVP volunteer lodging	4,000,000	8,000
Land subdivisions	3,000,000	6,000
Total	9,000,000	18,000

Source: Ministère de la Coopération and AFVP

*US$ amounts are given using an approximate 1995 rate of 700 CFA to $1

Appendix 3

Commune of Aboisso tri-annual budget priorities:

2002-2003 budget in CFA and US$*

2002 planned projects	in CFA	US$
Opening of roads to 200 lots in CAFOP (Rive-Gauche) quarter	750,000	1,070
Construction of market in Bakro village	1,400,000	2,000
Environmental improvements to Eboikro quarter	3,500,000	5,000
Construction of restaurant structure at new bus station	14,550,000	20,785
Purchase of tractor, trailer and loader for garbage collection	7,000,000	10,000
Purchase of furniture for Secretary-General's home	2,500,000	35,714
Purchase of furniture for City Hall offices	13,322,000	19,031
Total**	43,022,000	61,460
2003 planned projects		
Purchase of furniture for Secretary-General's home	1,000,000	1,429
Purchase of furniture for City Hall offices	7,713,000	11,019
Purchase of three computers for general administration	6,000,000	8,571
Completion of work on City Hall enclosure	15,000,000	21,429
Completion of work on cultural center	13,287,000	18,981
Redevelopment of old bus station site	6,000,000	8,571
Total**	49,000,000	70,000
2004 planned projects		
Landscaping for City Hall courtyard	8,550,000	12,214
Purchase of garbage truck	11,000,000	15,714
Completion of work on cultural center	7,713,000	11,019
Redevelopment of old bus station site	5,000,000	7,143
Completion of redevelopment of old marketplace site	4,565,000	6,521
Development of Rive-Gauche marketplace	5,000,000	7,143
Construction of market in Ayébo-Assouba villages	11,172,000	15,960
Total**	53,000,000	75,714

*US$ amounts are given using an approximate 2002 rate of 700 CFA to $1
** US$ amounts to not add up to total due to rounding errors

Interviews

Interviews were carried out in January 2002 unless otherwise indicated

Aboisso Mayor's Office:

Famien ALLOU, Third Adjoint to the Mayor
Manlan BOSSON, Chief of Cabinet
Mékoua DOSSO, Chief of Financial Services
Jean-Claude ECKPONON, Financial Administrator, Financial Services
Etché Alexis ELLEINGAND, Mayor and Delegate of Aboisso
Thomas FAGLA, Secretary-General
Seydou GUEYE: First Adjoint Mayor
Denis Bléwed N'GUESSAN, Manager of Tax Collection, Financial Services
Mr. TANOH, Chief of Technical Services
Francis VANGA, Engineer, Technical Services

Other:

Ayémou AYEMOU, Planner, Ministry of Construction and Urbanism, Aboisso office
Sylvie BESSONAT, volunteer 1995-97, Association Française des Volontaires du Progrès (interviews 1996-97)
Solange BROU, Social Worker, Aboisso Social Center
Touré Abou GARBA, Director of Sokoura I Primary School, Aboisso
Appolinaire GNAGO, Head of the Aboisso Social Center
Charles GOHOU, Teacher, Lycée Moderne d'Aboisso, and SOS neighborhood resident
Frédéric LEROND, volunteer 1994-96, Association Française des Volontaires du Progrès (personal communication, March and April 2002)
Roger N'DA, Responsible for Land Affairs, Aboisso Prefecture
Frédéric NGBLA, Office Head, Societé d'Eau de la Côte d'Ivoire (SODECI), Aboisso
Monique N'GUETTA, Social Worker, Aboisso Social Center
Ibrahim SOW, Sokoura resident and officer of Amicale des Frères Unis d'Aboisso-Sokoura
Mariam TOURE, community leader, T.P. neighborhood
Adam-Kolia TRAORE, Secretary-General, Prefecture of Aboisso
Yapi SOUHANOU, Head of Technical Services, Compagnie Ivoirienne d'Electricité (CIE)

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